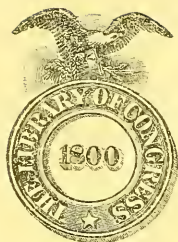


# HOSPITAL HEROES



ELIZABETH WALKER BLACK



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## HOSPITAL HEROES







Elizabeth Walker Black.

# HOSPITAL HEROES

BY

ELIZABETH WALKER BLACK

"We've seen too much to remember. We're too little to hold it. Men are things that think a little but chiefly forget. If one did remember there wouldn't be any more war."

—"Under Fire."

NEW YORK

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TO  
MY MOTHER AND FATHER  
WHO HAVE FOUR STARS IN THEIR SERVICE FLAG





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Laurette Taylor for giving me the inspiration to go "Out There," untrained, but willing to work, the American Girls' Aid for my passport, and Mrs. Noé-Daly for taking me to the front.

For helping me to "stick it," my thanks are due to the letters written by my mother and my Civil War uncle, who believe that girls, as well as boys, should leave home to stand by the colors, and serve with every bit of themselves the country which is the mother of us all.

ELIZABETH WALKER BLACK.



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## HOSPITAL HEROES



## CHAPTER I

### THE LETTER-BOX

THE office of "Gestionnaire" was a mass of floating veils and soiled aprons as every one looked eagerly for letters on their way to luncheon.

"No American mail, yet!" "There hasn't been any for weeks." "Nothing much for you," tossing some dingy envelopes in my direction with my name spelled in every conceivable manner: Le Blat, Blac, Blague.

I took them away to a quiet corner to enjoy them by myself as a dog with his bone. They were very precious, these letters, written for the most part in pencil; and very hard to read, not because the handwriting was poor, but because it was too good — so fine and small. They came as thank-you letters from the trenches or from beds in base hospitals whenever a

train of evacuation took my wounded out of the danger zone. I call them mine because I had the ward for "Petits Blessés," and, being the less serious cases, they were sent off as quickly as possible to make room for the new ones who were brought in every day from the trenches where they received their first dressing. I liked to receive these letters, for they showed that in spite of the rush of work I had made friends.

I opened a large yellow envelope, and read:

MADemoiselle:

I dare not think you will remember me, but receive anyway the thanks of a little poilu who had the honor of being taken care of by a little miss. A thousand times thanks! How have I had such happiness, I who never had luck in my life. I have been in two hospitals since leaving the Auto Chir No. 7,\* but I missed the soft hand that used to do my dressing. Often I see in thought Ward V, always joyous that ward. Do you sing still in the evening? How can

\* Automobile Chirurgial, a surgical hospital ready to move at any time, attached to an evacuation or field hospital near the front.

I forget the good care you gave? One does not forget so soon good people. I dare not ask, though I would like the pleasure of receiving a letter from you now and then telling me what is happening in that Ward. I would like to sharpen your pencil again or roll the cotton for the dressing cart.

Do you remember the day you trimmed all our moustaches? How proud we had been all the younger ones to have acquired these sweeping graces of manhood, and how "Monsieur le Tigre" roared when his disappeared under your relentless shears! You had the courage, Mademoiselle. It was just after the "soupe," and you said you could stand it no longer, that we must all be trimmed like the Americans. Since revisiting my home in Bordeaux which is full of Americans, I appreciate your point of view.

Now completely healed, I have rejoined my regiment. It is five o'clock in the morning and I am in a hole with water to my ankles. We have reached the second line of the Boches. I worked with confidence because I thought I was fighting as much for you as for myself, and see, because of this thought, I am safe and sound. When will this abominable war be ended? You too are near the Front, like the soldiers doing your duty. It must be very tiring to be with

your wounded so long without a rest. I give you all my compliments on your beautiful act of devotion. Permit me to offer you these little flowers received in a letter from my parents for good luck.

I close my letter in wishing you good health. Will you wish the doctor, D——, good morning for me? Also the orderly, Leclercq. I pray you to excuse my writing in pencil on such modest paper, but it is a poor little poilu who writes. Receive the expression of my highest consideration. [Followed by a complicated signature and army address.]

The next letter was written in lavender ink on pale-blue paper with a deeper-blue border.

MY DEAR LITTLE NURSE:

Our journey in the hospital train was good, and I am growing accustomed to having only one leg and a half. I am in the mountains to get the good air. This hospital is good but how I regret the Auto Chir No. 7 where you were so kind. I am bored here. I think often of the troubles I made you endure. I was a restive patient, never satisfied, always scolding. How I shouted

"Enough! Enough! Gently!" every time you gave the Carrel treatment. Today I ask forgiveness for all that. Will you be indulgent enough to pardon me? I cannot make grand phrases. I can only say a big thank you very simple and sincere. My parents write that they wish me to thank you for the good care I received during my stay in your ward. I am homesick for that ward. I hope to see you in the United States after the war. I have found your fête day in my little calendar of the saints. It is my prayer that the war will end on that day, November nineteenth.

I have been decorated with the "médaille militaire" and the "croix de guerre" and am very happy. But I wish you were here. No one comes through the ward at two o'clock saying "Milk or chocolate?" and counting the number of orders for each on her fingers. I remember your difficulty in pronouncing French words and phrases which made us laugh. A lot of little cares and attentions have been discounted which I never lacked with you.

Will you give my address please to the "Vaguemestre" so he can send my letters here? I will never forget you for you took good care of me when I suffered most. I am always afraid you may be wounded, too, by



a bomb from the aeroplanes. You are so near the lines. And the cold weather? You must be frozen. You were always so cold and could hardly hold the thermometer to shake it down.

With all the best wishes of a grateful little soldier who admires your devotion.

There were several picture post-cards. One from a farmer's unit in the interior where the crippled soldiers were taught to serve their country even if they had lost a hand or a leg. Another was a picture of a casino on the Riviera transformed into a convalescent home. Another sent "poor little cards of my own country" having returned on leave before going back to the trenches, and beginning the weary game all over again. They were all marked "Souvenir of a blessé who will never forget," and were sent with the usual polite expressions of "homages and sentiments the most respectful and devoted." One very elaborate card had flowers embroidered in colored silk and opened like an envelope enclosing

a little card printed in English for my special benefit: "Greetings from France. To my dear Brother."

One letter was in English from a French boy born in San Francisco. He was not one of my *blessés*, but visited my ward often and helped me with my French, being a better interpreter than letter-writer. Here it is as I received it:

DEAR MISS:

Don't take care if i speak not very well. i write like the french speak. You have one of my chaps in your room in Bed No. 41. tell him if you please that the boys of the 3 piece give him a good day and hope him much better. Tell me how is he please.

I am at home since yesterday for twenty days. i hope you always in good health. Your's sincerely, the American boy who was in your hospital. Great hope to you!

An artillery sergeant "permitted" himself to send me his photograph, standing proudly beside his cannon. He also sent his cordial salutation and profuse apologies for

the grimace he had made on account of the sun.

Several of the *blessés* called me “*mademoiselle marraine*” instead of “*mademoiselle*” or “*infirmière*” (nurse). The next letter was from one of these godsons of war, enclosing a post-card.

MY DEAR AND GOOD LITTLE MARRAINE:

I permit myself to send you this picture of the chateau where we are being cared for. I hurry to write you these few words. For several days *blessés* have arrived from Auto Chir No. 7 who speak often of *Mademoiselle Marraine*. You were a model “*Infirmière*” and all the patients loved you. Here I begin to make friends who ask me for a song, but I think often of the evenings in Ward V. I enjoyed singing to you in my little bed No. 6. I was better off there than here in a chateau. I have lost *Rivière*. My foot is better but I still use crutches. I am 18 kilometers from *François* and when I am better I shall walk over to say hello.

With greatest respect and thanks for good care received,

A little lame “*filleul*” who thinks of you.  
I permit myself to give you my address,

and I hope you will write me news of you, if only two lines. I cannot help thinking of you because you were so kind.

Another "filleul" thanked me most appreciatively for some cigarettes and chocolate I sent to him when the time came for him to return to the front lines:

GOOD MORNING, DEAR MARRAINE:

What a good surprise today! I see you are going to spoil your "filleul." I received the wonderful package in good condition and divided it with some of my comrades. How grateful we all are! But I cannot express myself well enough to tell you.

After 24 hours on the railroad and 110 kilometers on foot, we have arrived at a little village not far from you. I tried to see you but met the gendarme and not having a permission was forced to return. Enfin, one must submit without murmur. Since it must be thus, one must resign oneself to disappointment. I wanted to give you a little present, a shell of our glorious seventy-five which I have decorated. I am sending it hoping you will be pleased.

We will be in the trenches eight days and then released for eight days or for three or

four months. How long the hours will seem ! Do you know what gives me courage ? My little Marraine. I went to the war in the first days of 1914 when there were no good marraines to console and amuse us with their kind letters of encouragement and hope. No one dreamed then that they would come to lighten the dreary solitude of the trenches. And now who of us is not happy in corresponding with one of you ? You help the task of the soldier more than you realize. But there are few who when wounded have a marraine for a nurse. I wish all the blessés could be cared for by a little mademoiselle marraine, but alas ! what a futile wish ! To most nurses we are but broken bodies. They do not trouble themselves about that terrible malady, the cafard. I think you made it your duty to look happy even if you were not. I hope my letter will find you in good health. My health is perfect. "Messieurs les Boches" must look out for themselves !

I opened a little black-bordered note with a sinking heart. It was from the young wife of an artist who used to draw clever caricatures for me, and had since returned to the firing-line. She wrote to tell me of his death,

“killed in action,” such a brave little note filled more with pride of being the widow of a hero than of sorrow or bitterness at having the dearest thing in her life snatched away so ruthlessly. “One must pay for the privilege of being the wife of a hero of France. I will pay with my widowhood.”

A dear old man with four children whom he has not seen for fourteen months wrote in a hand that tottered and spread all over the page. He was at the hospital when I first came and keeps on writing every now and then from another hospital to thank me all over again. I wish these poilus would not be so grateful. Their appreciation makes me feel guilty. There are so many things I wanted to do for them, and there was so little time.

DEAR LITTLE INFIRMIÈRE OF OTHER TIMES:

It is going better with me although I have a little feebleness in my left leg, and no more of your frictions “in the direction of the heart.” The beds are not as good as those in Auto Chir No. 7. I am in a little

draught from the window and no one thinks of putting a bed sock on my head. I have received some more pictures from my wife of the children but no one cares to see them. You would be pleased to see that the boy has grown taller than his older sisters now. I am well taken care of but you see this does not prevent me from thinking often of your hospital.

I hear with pleasure that you have a ward of your own now. How happy you must be, alone and independent, no one to scold you any more.

I begin to get up but must not leave the ward. My back is not all well yet. When I look at the end of the arm that is cut off, I wonder what my children will say. Then I remember what you told me about crippled bodies not being half so bad as crippled brains or hearts. I may go home soon, but will not forget you. I pray you to accept some cards of my native country and surroundings.

Permit me, Mademoiselle, to thank you for the courage and goodness and tenderness you have shown towards me and my wounded friends. I thank you with all my heart for coming such a long way to take care of us. I shake your hand cordially and cry loudly: "Vive l'Amérique!"



That night when the rumble of artillery seemed louder and the scratching of mice in the paper ceiling over my bed alarmed me even more than the guns, and the mattress felt harder than usual, I could not sleep for a long time, and so I thought about the letters. You can find rose-colored spectacles anywhere, they say, if you try hard enough. The blessés have found mine for me.

A few months ago I was comfortably enjoying the cynical excitements and futile pleasures of what I considered life. Since then I have lived and worked and suffered among people who had been at the front so long that it was as commonplace to them as if they were only in a little town in peacetime, instead of in a very busy field-hospital seven miles from the firing-line.

These letters make me realize that the work I am doing, however small it may be in comparison to the wholesale surrender of lives once belonging to individual minds

and hearts, is yet big enough to make me forget my endless discomforts. War is less exalting than the civilian realizes who takes his three square meals a day, comfortable house, and bombless nights of undisturbed sleep for granted. Death is unimportant and hard work makes one forget fear, but it is harder to endure the little discomforts because they are always there to annoy when one is tired — the perpetual mud and dampness, the wind blowing down the pipes of the inadequate stoves and putting out the fire, the snow sifting in through cracks in the paper windows, the unvarying supply of potatoes, war-bread, and tinned food, and, worst of all, no real baths.

The blessés make it all worth while and chase away the “cafard,” that slough of despond when you feel you don’t like to be out there at all and yet would hate not to be there. Luxuries seem contemptible when men are dying. One cannot be homesick when looking back is like seeing a view

through the wrong end of opera-glasses, so small and insignificant. It seems unreal back there with all the hating and pen-and-ink fighting. Here, there is a wonderful "camaraderie," a fine feeling that joins all in a common cause, and makes up for the many things that are taken away. There is regeneration in knowing you can meet the worst and survive. I am happier here than I have ever been before because I am doing something where history is being made among people who have a contempt for anything not the bravest. We are doing a work into which no selfishness enters, and in which there is no restless wondering what to do next.

Among the waste of bones and flesh that once were the physically fit of France, the things which each individual gives up count for little. Instead, there is a grim determination not to waste any more time with death so near. I cannot understand how this work would ever harden one. Pity and

sacrifice must purify the whole nature. A courage comes out of the crucible, more of the soul than of the nerves, which lifts one above the terror, doubt, and pain. Afterward, when the great elation is over, one must have developed and the future will be better on account of it.)

## CHAPTER II

### AMERICAN CRUSADERS

AS soon as I realized that life in war-time must be either danger and adventure and active service, or safety and tedium and a passive helping to "win the war" at home, I made my choice and took my opportunity when it came. If some were giving their lives for the happiness and safety of the others, I could not stay behind and comfortably accept such a sacrifice. When so many are doing big things, I could not do little ones. I had to go out with them and risk everything for real service. If happiness and safety are worth such a price of blood and self-abnegation, I must not shirk, but pay it too, instead of leaving the hard work to others while I hide under some excuse and wait for them to "come marching home."

The crossing was uneventful as far as submarine activity was concerned, but very interesting as to passengers. The steamer was crowded with people, many in uniform, every one with a mission. Here was no sluggish blood nor eyes blind to duty. There was an exhilaration in being one of such a company of brave people, some on diplomatic errands, three hundred ambulance drivers for the Norton Harjes and American Field Service, aviators for the Lafayette Escadrille, canteen and Y. M. C. A. workers, and our hospital unit of doctors, nurses, and aides.

Dreading a domestic brass-band farewell, I started off alone, having seen my family on the train for their summer instead. I was afraid that the good-by side of the boat might make me weaken and lose heart, so I left the waving crowd and found a corner on the upper deck, facing the ocean and unknown future that lay beyond it. Here in the rain, I made a circle of dead

matches in a pathetic attempt to smoke and be a man, until the ship had left the harbor, and I had regained my courage enough to join my friends. There were other moments of self-doubt and depression, but they were easily overcome after this first victory. There is a romantic excitement and personal courage in being detached from the every-day life of home and habit. The thrill of being a part of this great war made me forget to be lonely or afraid as we sped nearer and nearer the danger zone.

"I didn't know they were taking children over there." Looking around, I found my corner had been discovered by one of the ambulance boys. He was looking disdainfully at the dead matches. Having learned to smoke only a few months before, he was feeling very superior and grown-up, and it evidently hurt his pride to have me starting off on his big adventure, too. I did not reply to his taunt, so he went on:

"What are you doing here?"

"Trying not to cry," I answered truthfully.

"You were silly to come," was his cold comfort. "What good can you do? You should have stayed at home and married."

"I didn't want to. I couldn't have been happy enjoying a selfish safety I hadn't earned. It was more a feeling than a reason that made me come."

"You don't look very happy now," he remarked, as he lit a cigarette, preparing to stay and probe the matter further.

"That's because I feel so useless and stupid among all these capable-looking people. But when we get over, I am sure I can help. I am to begin in a supply-room."

"What is that?"

"I'm not sure, but I hope to work out of it to a ward so I can wear a uniform."

"Ever been in a hospital?"

"Not very often."

"You didn't train in one?"



"I helped in a baby clinic when they were short-handed, and I learned to take histories, temperatures. . . ."

"But what do you know about wounded men?"

"I commenced the Red Cross home-nursing course, but it didn't have any wounded in it, so I thought the best way to learn would be in the midst of them."

"Come and watch the steerage. That'll train you some for the men who come in from the trenches."

There was another inexperienced but enthusiastic girl, who like myself was to start work in a supply-room. I will tell our story so that others, who feel useless but are anxious to do something that takes more of themselves than the little war-work games at home, may be inspired and encouraged by our experience. Incidentally, the demand for nurses was so great that neither of us were put in a supply-room. The other girl went to La Panne, I

might add, and had a ward of her own parallel to one managed by a trained nurse, doing the same work and gaining much praise from Doctor Depage and the matron. Our school motto proved truer than we realized: "Not for our school but for our lives we learn." The things we had to learn this time were harder, but we were older and more eager.

There was gun practice and boat drill, but except for much staying up at night looking for submarines and the fact that life-preservers were much in evidence, the life of the ship was as care-free as in peacetimes. The decks were dark, but always gay with singing and the tinkling of ukuleles and mandolins. One former glee-club star even played a tiny piano, undaunted by the darkness. These concerts stopped when the procession of blankets and pillows warned us that those who fled from a sleepless night in stuffy staterooms, with all the port-holes closed by order, were about to

try their luck under the stars. Staggering under their burden, they stumble along from one person to another, until finally, after groping in every direction, putting their hands in various eyes and mouths, they succeed in finding a little place for themselves, often remaining till six in the morning, when they are ruthlessly aroused by a torrent of water warning them too late that the decks were being cleaned. Then every one adjourns to the lounge or stairs, "shooting crap" until breakfast is served.

We made a big adventure of it, and yet underneath our frivolous holiday exterior was the earnest hope that the adventure would ripen into a bigger service. If we laughed and danced and sang too much, it was to hide a little nervousness as to the immediate future, and an embarrassed self-consciousness that we were doing something hard and real in leaving our comfortable homes and going into a foreign, war-wrecked country. We were most of us quite young.

Those who are young enough and free enough to go are the lucky ones and, in spite of danger and discomfort, they are happier than those who must stay behind with the rumors and "Extras!" changes, regrets, and good-bys. We were to forget our troubles in the immensity of universal suffering and find out the real facts. They would have to believe what they were told, and wonder and worry.

In the danger zone I slept on deck in a heavy coat thrust upon me by an ambulance boy, "so as not to die of exposure in a life-boat." I filled the large pockets with crackers, fruit, hairpins, and pictures of my family. Ever since that time, when I have been sent out alone to do anything hard, I have carried the feeling of taking somebody else with me. K—— even had a book so she would not be bored if we had to wait many days before being picked up by another steamer.

I liked to lie where I could watch the

water, so peaceful and harmless-looking. The phosphorus was well worth the trip, for with the lights out, it sparkled and danced along beside the boat in intensified splendor. The fresh air revived me after the month of June which I had spent in New York trying to be useful selling bonds, taking the census, rolling bandages, and knitting. The stars were reassuring, for they went on holding the world in place undisturbed. It gave me a feeling of security and endurance to look up at them and know that they would go on and on through wars and men's lives without change. It makes one believe that some power guides the ship that speeds through the fogs without a sound of warning and crashes through the blackest nights without a light. No matter what wars and men may destroy, the world goes on held in place by a stronger force than they.

I have often since longed for my little stateroom with trunks and bags piled in

front of bed and closets, making it difficult to move or dress, the carpet, seldom swept, covered with crumbs and orange-peel, and the baskets of fruit outside the door attracting flies and making people cross. It belonged to the first part of my real life, and I try to keep the sense of humor that made it seem so amusing instead of uncomfortably messy.

“Come and have a look at France!” called one of the aviators, as he hurried from the dining-salon.

We watched the waves our steamer made as they overflowed the banks of the river that took us to Bordeaux. Large swells swept up into fields of grain or pastures where cows were startled in their grazing and had to run away. Little boats at anchor were so disturbed that they capsized. The green banks and little farmhouses made it sad to realize that war had devastated just such peaceful scenes. Such a country was too beautiful to be ruthlessly destroyed.

Next day we took a ride in a seagoing hack driven by a fat old man who fell asleep persistently whenever we stopped to look at anything, and had to be waked up in French. What I remembered of the language from my governess and school-days was just enough to make me misunderstood. My first luncheon was not a success, as I forgot what little I knew in the excitement, and asked for preserved apple-trees instead of plums, and was given ice-cream when I asked for a glass of water. When the waiter explained that he was not French but Spanish, I understood spinach and said: "Non, je voudrais petits pois."

The ride through the city was depressing. So many closed houses, crape veils, and crippled soldiers! Women were running the tram-cars, and a few children in black roamed through the quiet streets. Two art museums were open and contained many fine works brought from the Louvre for safety. On the whole, the art was rather



morbid and unhealthy. I liked the "paysages" best. They seemed to tell those who doubted that the faith that brooded over the farm-lands and countryside would not be destroyed by the apathy of the city. The cathedral was a religion in itself. The spirit of France is kept alive by the quiet, humble people who burn candles at the altars of the big cathedrals and cover the shrines in the little country churches with photographs and prayers of "Protect my son."

On the way to Paris we passed through soft, peaceful country with long, graceful lines of Lombardy poplars and châteaux high on wooded hills with wreaths of red-roofed cottages around them, like Edmund DuLac's fairy-tale illustrations. Women were working in the fields. Sometimes we passed gangs of German prisoners at work, the only discordant note in the landscape.

Late in the evening we arrived in Paris. The head of our unit went to the seashore,



evidently no longer responsible for us, in spite of having assured our families that we would be chaperoned most carefully in Paris. The understanding had been that we would remain there only three or four days while the head doctor inspected several French hospitals which were at our disposal in order to make the best choice. K——'s brother met her and took us to his hotel, where we stayed three months waiting for further orders, unable to sign up with any other hospital, as we were enrolled with this unit for six months. On our way over, the American Red Cross had taken charge of all American units, and the French Service de Santé had nothing to offer us as near the front as we had hoped.

In the meantime, we found work, some of us at surgical dressings, others at the Y. M. C. A., and the rest in a canteen at the Gare de l'Est, where we supplied the crowds of soldiers coming and going with

large, full-coursed meals. It was a turmoil of constant demands, everything to be done at once amid much shouting in French for more soup, bread, or plates, much burning of fingers when the soup was ladled out into cups, and a weary arm that went on and on cutting large chunks of heavy war-bread. I was in charge of the first section and had to supply all the soup, hors d'œuvres, bread and butter, as well as making change in "sous." It was like a Billy Sunday cafeteria, only not so orderly and clean.

I was glad to have some work which kept me too busy to think and made me feel useful, and preferred it to surgical dressings, where each one had to sign her name at the end of the day with the number of compresses or bandages she had done. The strain of sitting still so long and the hurried feeling were too much for me to stand day after day. The canteen was better, though it was a disappointment to be so

far from the front where the only signs of war were high prices, poor bread, and the hum of aeroplanes overhead like great bumblebees.

In the summer of 1917 the Paris air-raids were of little importance. We talked or slept through several without realizing. Seemingly cheerful people strolled unconcernedly up and down the boulevards, or sat at the little tables along the sidewalk. Shops were open, even those selling expensive gowns and jewelry. Many of them were closed at the beginning of the war, but reopened when the proprietor returned with his wounded stripe. Some of the fashionable hotels on the Champs-Élysées had been turned into hospitals, but others were doing business, the work being carried on by old men, women, little boys, or wounded soldiers who were no longer able to go to the front. These "reformés" were usually covered with medals as a compensation for the loss of a leg or arm. Vaudevilles,

theatres, and operas were patronized by men on leave. It was not unusual to see the performers wearing the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. The elevator-man at Morgan Harjes' had so many medals I hated to trouble him. Outside of Cartier's stood another war hero with a new face.

A civilian was a rare sight. The few one did see were old men or foreign representatives from Spain, South America, and Switzerland. Everywhere one saw the quiet efficiency and fitness of the English and American khaki, the elaborate glamour of the French and Italian uniforms, with here and there a Russian, Serbian, Belgian, Japanese, or Indian with his voluminous head-dress piled high above his dark face and flashing eyes.

The Frenchwomen were usually in mourning and went out rarely, but now and then one noticed one of the better class, sensitive and piquant, daintily dressed in welcome contrast to the sober uniformity or

mistaken elaborateness of the Englishwomen, with their pale-colored tulle scarfs and dark woolly suits. The Englishwomen are at their best in khaki. I have seen them repairing their own machines, undisturbed by snow, cold, or mud, quick and cheerful like boys.

There were no cabarets, no music in the hotels or dancing, except in places which were frequently raided. One could have hot water only at week-ends. Monday and Tuesday were meatless, Tuesday and Wednesday were without pastry and candy. Restaurants closed at half past nine. The whole city was dark at that hour, and there was nothing to be had, not even a taxi. One was expected to economize light and go to bed early.

### CHAPTER III

#### WITH THE THIRD FRENCH ARMY

**J**UST as I was resigning myself to the railroad canteen for the duration of the war, one of my former school friends arrived in Paris on her way home for a rest after a year of nursing. She thrilled me with tales of her work in a French field-hospital seven miles from the German lines. I was reassured to find she still had her hair, teeth, and health in spite of the terrible stories that had been told at home to discourage me from coming. D—— was just the same after her hard work; if anything, more enthusiastic and alive. She arranged a meeting for me with the head of her Equipe, who by some lucky chance was in Paris that day. Arrangements were made for me to go to this hospital, as help

was needed for the hard winter ahead, and even an untrained person could be of service.

It was not difficult to leave the other unit which had brought me over. In fact, I was released with pleasure. I think the head doctor would have liked to have been released from his own unit after such a long period of waiting, tangled up in red tape. Then began the task of collecting all the papers required for admission to the war zone, and several shopping tours for uniforms and heavy winter clothes.

At last, armed with every sort of paper, I set off from the Gare du Nord wearing the military "tricolore" and an identity bracelet. While in Paris, I had been obliged to have two papers, one which permitted me to stay in France provided I did not change my residence, called a "permis de séjour," and the other my "immatriculation," a leaf from the register of all foreigners. To these I had now added an Amer-



ican Red Cross card, 'a military nurse's "livret" (a sort of diploma to be signed at each place where service was done), a "carte d'identité," a "carnet d'étranger" which allowed a foreigner to enter the war zone, and a "bon de transport" so I and my baggage could travel free, like the soldiers. Besides these, I had to have my American passport ever ready to show. To four of these were attached my photograph. I could not forget myself very easily, and would have been in great difficulties if I forgot any of my literature. Later, when on leave, I had another paper to show the railway authorities and the "mairie," an officially signed and sealed "permission." I have heard American aviators boast of leaving their French camp without permission, and "getting away with it" by waving chewing-gum coupons as they passed the guards. Of course, if caught, they always said they "did not understand," but I understood so well that I was quite intimidated



and trembled every time, worrying about my papers being "en règle."

Two other "infirmières" went with me. We left the train at Compiègne, where we were met by our "directrice" and one of the doctors, who had come by "camion" for supplies, and would take us and our baggage the rest of the way. We had lunch in the Palace Hotel, opposite the château which was then used as Etat-Major for the French General Staff. I little expected that I would come here to live in February, while taking a course at the Carrel and Ambrine Hospitals, and have what the Tommy calls a "near squeak," my room losing its wall during an air-raid the night after I left for Paris. Nor did I dream that in April I would be sleeping in the deep caves under that château for protection during the bombing of the first German drive.

The "camion," a large, uncomfortable motor supply-truck, rumbled over the road

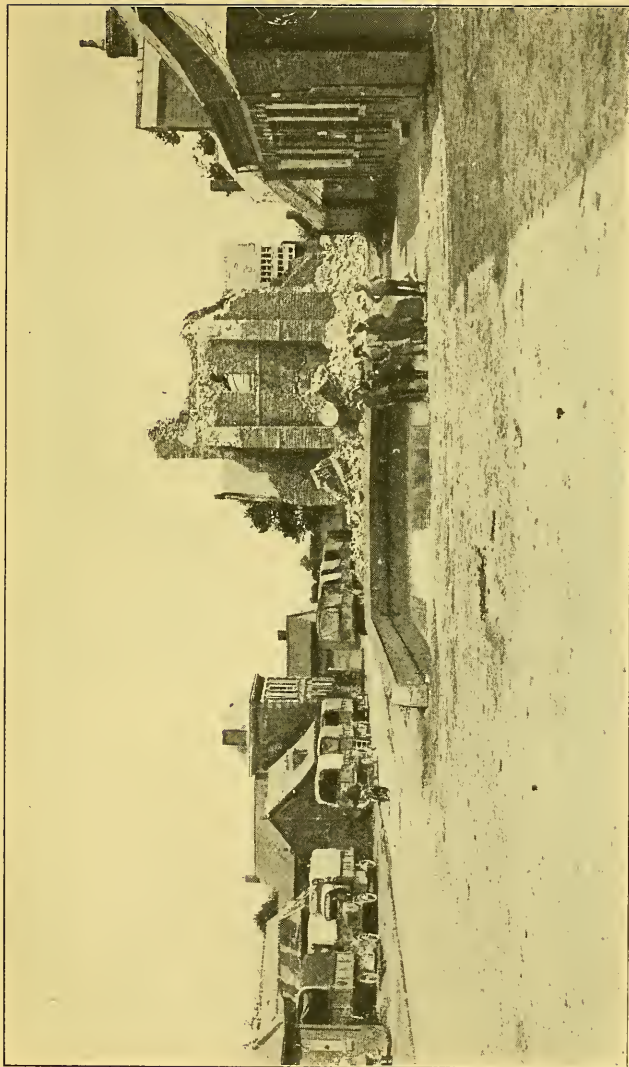
carrying us ever nearer the front. The Aisne is a flat country of plains and river valleys. In pre-war days there had been many beautiful forests, but most of these had been destroyed. The Germans were driven out in March, 1917, and in their retreat made the land even flatter by shelling and burning towns and systematically cutting down whole orchards. Farm implements were broken, cattle and horses killed. So complete was the work of destruction that nothing remained but a levelled landscape of roofless and windowless houses that looked like empty boxes, to some of which the poor peasants had returned and were living in the ruins. At one place there had been a large factory, but only a few pieces of broken machinery remained, and near by were a few graves, with crosses of wood which gave the name, date, and rank of some dead soldiers. These graves seemed such peaceful spaces in the battle-scarred land and death such a grateful sleep for

tired men that I did not feel as much pity for them as I do for those safe at home who shirked their duty and were deaf to the call. They are left so far behind with their flabby souls and sluggish blood living selfish lives, while they let others die for their safety.

There had been little attempt at rebuilding, except rude huts of wood or tile. The chimney-stacks and kitchen ranges alone seem to have resisted the fire, as if, in defiance of war, they wish to show that the French home and "cuisine" will endure forever. We passed through a part that once had been No Man's Land. It looked as dreary as it sounds, a desert of tumbled stone, barbed wire, trenches, and dugouts, with here and there a sign to show where once had been a village. Some sullen German prisoners were working on the road as we went through this vast land of mud, treeless, houseless, pitted with shell-holes.

I was glad to leave this ruined country-

side and arrive at the small village in which our hospital was located. This place had not suffered so badly, although its church, of the twelfth century, was only a pile of stones. Cugny had three little stores and several houses in which troops were billeted as they passed to and from the firing-line. The streets were always lined with rows of "camions." There were hedgerows along the roadside and quaint little farmhouses in the surrounding country. I was surprised to see children playing about the roads as unconsciously as if they had not been within sound of the guns. The French peasants continue to live in their homes at any risk. If they are shelled one day, they hide in cellars or run away to a safer place, but always return. It is strange that there is no word for home in the French language when they are so home-loving, while the Germans who talk incessantly of their Vaterland are apparently quite as happy in any other country.



### Cugny.

The small village in which our hospital was located. . . . Cugny had three little stores and several houses in which troops were billeted.



The inhabitants always saluted our "tricolore." Some of them had remained through the German occupation of the village. They told dreadful stories, and assured us that most of the devastation was done on purpose so that nothing of value would be left for the Allies. Many of them were crazed with shock and sorrow, and begged us pitifully to find their daughters for them. The place was noticeably empty of young men and women.

When the refugees came pouring into the "Gare du Nord" during the first German drive, months later, I recognized some of the people from Cugny. There were canteens and even cots ready for them, and they sank down wearily with a dazed look in their sad faces. Train after train came in with the same huddled forms, each with a bundle of household goods, or treasures done up in a towel or pillow-slip. When they recognized me they nodded sadly:

"Yes, we had to leave. We dared not



stay a second time. We knew too well what would happen."

Our hospital was situated between the main road to the front lines and a railroad with an ammunition centre on either side, which means we were often under bombardment, especially when the Taube observers caught sight of troops marching to the front. From a little hill near us we could see, far away over the plains, the spire of the cathedral of St. Quentin, then in German hands, but spared, at least until they were forced to retreat. It seemed miraculous that it should be left while the rest of the country looked as if a giant mowing-machine had run across it.

Some English canteen women, also attached to the Third French Army and stationed near us, gave concerts and variety shows. They gathered the talented ones from the passing troops, and it was wonderful to see so many able-bodied men after the dreary rows of hospital beds con-



taining shreds of what were once the best men of France. After my first few weeks in the ward, I began to fear that there would be no more men left to fight. But here, crowded together in the "Théâtre du Front" were so many it made me want to look at them all the time, although the performance was excellent. The first few rows were reserved for officers and doctors, but the rest of the seats were full of *poilus*; they stood even in the aisles and doorway. The talent was of the best. There were reciters, humorists, a tenor, and a violinist who had left the Gymnase, Porte St. Martin, and Cigale to fight for their country.

A few nights after my arrival we entertained some of these canteen women at dinner. Afterward we went on a tour of the hospital, which was my first chance to see it. I had been too busy to find time for sightseeing.

There are several different *équipes*, but the politics are so involved that I am satis-

fied with the knowledge that the hospital is divided into two main parts: one for the wounded and one for the sick. "Blessés" and "Malades" they are marked at the entrance. There are many doctors to do the dressings and a few surgeons to operate, each with a staff of orderlies and French "ministérielles," women taken from other employments, like the mobilized men, and paid by the government. The French had few trained nurses at the beginning of the war, their hospitals having been managed by nuns.

Our équipe, forty women of all ages, characters, and nationalities, was organized and is managed by an American woman. Fortunately, we are never all together in our barracks at one time, some being away on leave or recuperating. Half of us are American, ranging from nineteen to fifty years of age, some unmarried, some married to Americans, some to French titles, and one deaconess. The other half are English mili-

tary nurses and V. A. D.'s, a French countess, and a French-Russian girl with strong revolutionary ideas. Our work is in the wards, receiving-room, assisting the doctors in the X-ray and laboratory departments, and at the dressings and operations, and superintending the work of the orderlies in the sterilizing-room.

To the large staff of doctors are added a group of medical students, who are sent here to complete their training, which was interrupted by the war, and an "Equipe de Renfort" sent to help during attacks when the work is heavy. I have sometimes felt that I had more "majors" than blessés, as these new doctors are constantly visiting the wards in search of "the arm that came in this morning," or "the head of last night." As there are so many heads and arms and every kind of wound coming in all the time, it is difficult to find each doctor's special case for him. I soon acquired a habit of greeting any casual visitor with

pad and pencil ready for orders, never sure who might be a new doctor. The medical students were another trial, as they would crowd around a bed while the surgeon lectured to them, keeping the blessé exposed in the coldest weather, and worrying him by discussing his case freely.

The hospital is a town of its own, with a railroad-station from which the blessés are sent to the interior as soon as they can travel to make room for others who are constantly arriving from the trenches. Rows and rows of sheds stretch away on every side, connected by plank walks. The corridors have floors of earth, and suggest subterranean caves or catacombs, as they are dark at night. There are twelve wards, wooden huts, connecting the corridor on each side. Each has room for forty-six or fifty beds. The officers have a ward of their own, and the Arabs and German prisoners are isolated.

The installation is quite remarkable con-

sidering the inaccessibility of our position, and the chance of the hospital being moved at any time to follow the army. There is a large receiving-room or "triage," heated by steam-pipes and stoves, an X-ray or "radio" with motor-cars attached carrying the dynamo for this apparatus and supplying electricity for the whole hospital, also a sterilizing and operating room, and two "salles de pansements" for the dressings not done in the wards. Supplies sent by the "Service de Santé" and American Red Cross are kept in another wooden hut. There are offices for the two *médecin-chefs*, a pharmacy, laboratory, and "gestion," where the administrative work is carried on by militarized priests and their assistants.

At the end of each ward are two little rooms, one used as kitchen by the orderlies, where the head, a corporal, has his desk and attends to the charts, special diets, and keeps the other little room, used by the

“infirmière,” supplied with material for the dressings, medicines, blankets, and linen. He sits at his desk (usually writing letters!) and superintends the work of the two orderlies who are supposed to keep the ward clean, sweeping and washing the floor twice a day, wait on the blessés, and serve the meals.

Most of the wounds are of such a nature that the blessés are put on “petit régime,” which means only liquid food, usually “po-tions” from the pharmacy—“calmante,” “todd,” or “vin de quinquina,” to be taken every two hours or a bottle finished in a day. The two meals from the hospital-kitchen and the breakfast coffee and chunk of bread are not enough for those who need nourishment, so I turned part of my little room into a kitchen where I made chocolate every day at two o’clock, which I gave with a bit of bread to dip into it.

The orderlies bring cold tea, coffee, and various mixtures called “tisane,” “tilleul,”

and "limonade," which I supplement with egg-nogs and milk from a near-by farm. I even squeeze the juice from jam-jars into water to make a variety of cool drinks for the feverish. The little alcohol-lamp is constantly burning either for cooking, boiling syringes and needles, or just heating water for hot-water bags, as it takes too much time to wait for the orderlies to get it. No one is supposed to enter this little room without my permission, and yet I noticed the 95 per cent alcohol disappearing rapidly and an empty bottle was found under one of the beds.

I came willing to do anything, but was relieved to find orderlies and even a few maids to help with the washing and bed-making. My training began under an energetic American woman who had a ward of forty-eight beds, and was temporarily in charge of the emergency ward as well until that "infirmière" returned from "permission." Fortunately, there were only



twelve cases in the emergency ward, and the wards were opposite each other. There were three orderlies and a maid in each, but we were hurriedly busy every minute. I started the first day with temperatures and pulses, and was grateful to the baby clinic for the only training I had ever had.

It was the first time I had even seen a hospital ward, except once when I had gone to visit a friend who was recovering from an operation for appendicitis, and I got into the accident ward by mistake. The sight had frightened me so much that I fairly ran through. This time, however, I could not run. There was so much work to be done and so many things for me to learn that I had no time to be upset. When I saw how cheerful they all were, reading or writing, talking, or playing games with each other, they reminded me of the little crippled children I used to teach on a boat in the East River in the winter or take for



rides to the seashore in the summer, all hurt and disabled together. Even those with their faces bandaged smiled "Bon jour" with their eyes.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BLESSÉS

“THERMOMETERS! Always a thermometer!” the blessés groaned as I started my afternoon round. In the morning, before they were thoroughly awake, it did not bore them so much. But by afternoon, when those who could get up were strolling about or trying out their new crutches, and the rest were playing cards or the “*jeu des dames*,” a game something like our checkers, all of them were feeling too well to see the necessity of a thermometer. However, it was a military rule that the charts for temperatures and pulses should be complete, with the dressing or operation marked as well.

It is quite a difficult task to bring each one back to his bed at four o’clock in the afternoon, connecting each man with his

chart, and not skipping any one. There are usually guests and much talking and confusion. The "phono" is going like mad, playing march after march, the favorite music of the poilu. None of the pulses beat in time with the music, so I have to count out loud. But if they see I am rushed with new arrivals, operated cases demanding much attention, and various interruptions, they hurry back to their places so I will not be late. They like to tease, but never hurt or exasperate, and realize I must finish before the doctors' visits and the "soupe," the universal word for anything to eat, just as "pinard" means wine to them.

Some of the names were so hard for me to pronounce, and there were several with the same one, that to simplify matters we made up nicknames. It was always a relief to reach the bed of "Le Boxeur," for a wound in his left leg kept him from wandering away. He also had both hands bandaged; one was so mangled we were in doubt

about saving it. I have to take his pulse in his forehead, and he likes to delay me by chewing to confuse the count. He has to be fed and is quite helpless, and yet can always joke about something. I hardly know whether to laugh or cry when he pretends to box with his big bandaged hands.

“Camouflage” was next to him, with white bandages across his face, making him look a part of the sheet. He was a tall “mitrailleur,” and showed me a photograph of his pretty fiancée in her Alsatian costume.

“Tell me, Mademoiselle Marraine,” he would always say anxiously, “do you think she will care for me when I return, a poor mutilé with a changed face? She always told me how handsome I was, so much more so than all the other men. Maybe she will marry Jean after all, when she sees what they have done to my face, those ‘sales Boches’ and these doctors. O la, la, what a terrible war!”

Before I had learned all their names and

wounds, I always had to admire their photographs. As soon as a man is brought into the ward, and has recovered sufficiently from his operation, he begins fumbling in his "musette," or if it has not been brought in yet, begs the orderly to hurry and find his bag of treasures, so he can "show Mademoiselle" his wife or fiancée or children. I always worry as to how these wasted bodies and amputated men will be received when they go home.

"I do not need a marraine, for I have a fiancée," said Davesne, limping along on crutches. "See how fast I can go now. Will you speak to me if you see me selling newspapers in the streets in New York?" He is six feet tall and very clever, and I hope for a better future for him, and yet I cannot help wondering what he will do, as I watch the empty pajama leg swinging from his stump. They all want to come to America after the war. I do hope some one will find work for them.

“Mademoiselle, you are a thief,” called “Rigolo” when I had progressed several beds beyond him. “I accuse you of stealing four sous!”

This was a never-failing source of merriment. When I am not noticing, some one will put a joke in my pocket. As the doctors’ visits come right afterward, there is much stifled amusement when I put my hand in my pocket to find my pad and pencil to take orders, and pull out a champagne cork or a pipe. Every one claims it as his own, and I am called a thief by many ferocious men with mustaches bristling in feigned wrath.

“Where is ‘Le Moqueur’?” I asked, looking about for a handsome boy of nineteen, who had come in with a shoulder wound which did not depress him in the least. He was almost too gay, teasing everybody all the time, and usually getting into trouble.

“There he is! See, beside the stove! He is trying to make the thermometer go up.”

I rescued it just in time, threatening to give him one for a whole hour as punishment. They were so expensive and easily broken. I was often the guilty one when I started off on a cold morning with hands so numb the thermometer would slip through as I was shaking it down. But "Monsieur le Thermomètre" had the worst score of all. Every time I gave him one, I said a mental good-by, for he invariably found a new way of breaking them. However, he was so eager to help me with my work that I could not be angry. He never tired of rolling cotton for the dressing-carriage, or sharpening pencils, though his leg was shot in several places. Each time he went to the "radio," a new piece of shell was discovered, necessitating another operation.

"Too much stomach," said "Soixante," who was trying to learn English from a book I had given him. He had been run over by a motor-truck, and worried more

about himself than any of those wounded in battle. His temperature was a matter of grave importance to him. He had a pulse of sixty for several days, and when I found it upset him for the whole day to have more or less than "soixante," I would mark it to please him whether it was fifty-eight or sixty-two, as he was not serious enough to matter, and yet it influenced his whole attitude toward life if he could see a straight line running across his chart. He had a violent relapse when, in my absence, some one marked sixty-four, and almost cried with joy when I returned and somewhat guiltily wrote: "Soixante."

Many of them guess and bet what their temperatures will be. If they have a fever and go up very high, I try to finesse and put their chart where they cannot see it, but the doctor usually spoils my plan by waving his arms excitedly, saying: "Oh, it goes up!"

The unhappy mend slowly, and so I



try to find out the special worries. They are more than mangled bodies to be shuddered at, quickly cared for, and passed hurriedly by. Each day men are brought in who have kept the enemy back and saved those behind the lines. After such an effort, what does it matter how dirty or querulous they may be? I cannot do enough for them, and I try to make a little time as I work in order to know each one separately without being partial, and find out their special worries and sorrows. I like to take care of them as individuals, not as cases to be tended professionally and then left to brood.

“What is the great ‘Samson’ crying about?” I whispered as I approached the largest man in the room, who had been there a long time with an abdominal wound which mended slowly. He was often hysterical and I had caught him several times tearing open his dressings, to scratch the wound.

"He has received no word from his parents for over a month," the man in the next bed explained.

I told him neither had I and I was so much farther away from my home, but one must be brave. He paid no attention until, remembering he had eaten no lunch, I made him some hot chocolate, his favorite delicacy. Even this he refused until I calmly fed him with a spoon. This made the others laugh, and soon he rallied and took the cup himself.

We see the morale of the army at a time when it is unfair to judge. Men come in delirious or hysterical, and they do not know what they are saying. Pain makes them say things they would not even think of before they were brought to us down and out. I have heard them swear at the doctors during dressings, call the orderlies and ambulance-drivers "embusqués," and say it is only a "fad" for Americans to come to France, that they will not really fight. But

the fact remains that whether these men wanted to or not, they have been heroes in the midst of all the horror and danger for four years, fighting for the safety of those behind the lines, and I cannot help feeling grateful to them, so grateful that it obliterates every other feeling. They have been superior to the rest of us, no matter how low they may sink afterward from the pain of their wounds or homesickness. In a few weeks these same men will be mending a hole in my sweater or working away at a silk table-cover which they weave on a little frame to give to me or sell when they return to the city. I took some cases of lost families to a special department of the Red Cross, and was glad to hear from the men later that their lost had been found.

“Monsieur le Crocodile” is always crying about imaginary hurts. One day, it is because they have hurt him so much at his dressing, that he must cry, “O, la, la,

how my leg hurts!" for hours afterward until one hopes they will not dress his leg again for some time. Again, he will be in tears because, "Look, Mademoiselle, there are two whole days since my dressing has been changed. O, la, la, what a miserable life! I am not being well cared for. They forget me."

However, he is easily pacified with a pair of brand-new bed-socks "sent all the way from America for 'M. le Crocodile,' because his crying was heard far away." But, poor man, his home is in German hands.

"You have been smoking too much," I announce as I come to "le Bébé."

"Please do not scold, 'Petite Maman,'" the youngest begs, "but bring me a hot-water bag, for I am so cold." Hot-water bags were very scarce. I had only five rubber ones for my forty-eight beds, and a few stone ones which the blessés called "soixante-quinze" because they were shaped

like the shells for their famous cannon. The others seemed to understand that "le Bébé" was a spoiled child and therefore privileged to receive more attention. I tried not to be partial, but he was so young and was suffering so much from two shattered legs which the doctor was trying to save by various experiments of Carrel treatments and plaster casts and steel plates screwed to the remaining bone. Finally, fearing sepsis, he had returned to the Carrel system of irrigating the wound, but "le Bébé" was so sensitive that the injections every two hours made him cry out with pain.

"Toto" pretended to be asleep, hoping I would pass by and not disturb him. He got his name the first day when I asked him for "the pulse," and evidently used the French slang for "cootey." After searching for several minutes while I waited, much mystified, he had said: "I cannot find the 'toto,' Mademoiselle." The others in-

sisted he had one, so the name clung to him. Fearing to make another mistake, I asked for "the hand" next time. Whereupon he shook my hand solemnly, saying: "Comrades, in spite of everything."

"Mademoiselle, will you be so good as to ask 'Monsieur le Major' when he comes if I may have a cachet of aspirin? My head aches." This formal request came from "l'Amoureux," so called because he had wakened from his operation ardently making love. It was so unusual for ether to affect any one in so amusing a manner, that he entertained the whole ward, to his great embarrassment later, for he was a most formal, retiring young man who spent most of his time quietly puzzling over an old edition of the *New York Times*. Every one begged for the laughing ether, but no one else had such a humorous after-effect. Too often they came back from an operation in tears.

"Don't forget the 'ventouses' this eve-

ning, please," said "Grandpère." He always wants cupping, whether the doctor has ordered the treatment or not. He is such an old man, I humor him when I have time, but he is so thin that not many of the little glasses will stay. We make quite a game of it, even the orderlies clump around the bed with their heavy sabots which they always forget to "leave at the door on entering the ward." Just as I think I have put on a good one that will stay, and the blessés cry, "Ça y est !" off it rolls, clattering along the wooden floor under the next bed. Nothing daunted, "Grandpère" shouts: "Encore !" He is never satisfied to have a few good ones but must always have "Just one more !" even if they clatter around him like hail-stones. I am so excited when one does take, that the blessés cheer and the orderlies clank back to their work, muttering: "That helps, that does good." We call the purple marks that are left medals for valor in the hospital. Once I



forgot to take them off when the ten minutes were up, in the confusion of having several things happen at one time, and poor "Grandpère" remained bent forward uncomfortably for nearly an hour without a word of complaint. I thought he would be cured after this experience, but next day he began asking for them as usual.

The "Artiste" was copying one of Otho Cushing's drawings of a Red Cross angel from an old *Life*. When I stopped to admire it as I interrupted his work prosaically with a thermometer, he said:

"I am glad it pleases you. I have made it for you, Mademoiselle Marraine, for you are our angel." He went on elaborating this theme while I took his pulse.

I was glad the "Sergeant," who ruled as king in the ward of poilus, called me at that embarrassing moment to show me some flowers some one had given him. He was so pleased with these few flowers that he called it a "fête." The ward was so bare



and drab, they liked to see me wearing a few flowers, or decorating the walls with holly or mistletoe.

“Gamin le Gaspillage, stop walking around with your thermometer, and look at this great chunk of bread I found on your little table.”

The orderlies were supposed to keep the bedside tables clean, washing the cups, bringing fresh towels and napkins, and removing crumbs of food and cigarette ashes. I had found so many pieces of bread left after each meal that I made a point of looking over these tables. They teased me about not wanting any bread to be wasted, asking me if I had been raised in Germany.

“We always take a big piece, hoping it may taste better than last time. What matter if it goes to waste? The government pays.”

They evidently thought after a lifetime of thrift, the government owed them this privilege. “Gamin le Gaspillage” was the

worst offender, as he left bits of cheese and butter as well as untouched pieces of bread. He always gave them to me laughingly when he saw me making a round in the cause of tidiness, saying:

“Look, here comes the poor Mademoiselle gathering up her dinner. Here, my poor child, is a crust for you.”

“Here is a nice book for you to read, Mademoiselle,” said “Monsieur le Valet.” He spent most of his time reading Balzac, which he called “delicious,” and looked like an artist with his pointed beard. His cultured voice and literary taste seemed above his profession. I was surprised when he asked me to take him back to America with me, offering as a special inducement to work three months gratis because I had dressed his foot so well. When a wound was not very serious, the doctors left it for me to dress. Although the “Valet” had lost his big toe, it was considered “peu de grave” and turned over to my care. He is usually



“Monsieur le Valet” (left) and other patients of Ward V.

He spent most of his time reading Balzac . . . and looked like an artist, with his pointed beard.



in a heated argument with his neighbor, "Monsieur le Sculpture," who has the foot of his bed raised on bricks like a pedestal, and the whole of one leg in a plaster cast.

All the blessés insist on keeping the rough bits of shell that have caused them so much trouble. After every operation, I must wash the blood-stained "éclat," tie it up in a compress, and hang it where they can always see their precious souvenir. The "bavards" like to talk about their wounds, though they never mention the battle-field, and show me a pocketbook with a shell-hole in it which saved their life.

I never discovered the origin of the "Begonias." They are the ones who walk about and help with the work, making the beds and feeding their helpless comrades. Their leader was the cause of my first attempt at dentistry. I was used to putting drops in eyes and ears that hurt, but was puzzled when the chief of the "Begonias" approached me, turning his mouth inside out

to show me a large cavity in his back tooth that was giving him great pain. I took him into my office at the back of the ward, and with all the others craning their necks to watch the performance through the little window, pushed a tiny bit of cotton soaked in iodine into the hole. Iodine is my standby remedy for all ills, but it was so hard to use it this time, that his chin was stained with trickles of brown and had to be scrubbed hard with Dakin, the best bleach I knew, to the amusement of the ward. Ever after, the chief of the "Begonias" had only to approach me with his mouth wide open, pointing inward and upward, to get a burst of laughter.

The "comedians" keep their end of the room cheerful with an unending supply of funny stories, told in a "patois" which I do not understand. From what I know of French wit and humor, it is probably just as well I do not understand their "badinage," which is a bit "rossé," and yet I like

to see them amused, no matter what they laugh at. "We *must* be gay," said one who had looked upon horrors untellable. This spirit is the hope of the future.

"Robespierre," a perfect likeness, opened the door for me when the thermometer session was over.

"Meyran wanted me to tell you, Made-moiselle, that there is a beautiful sunset, when you have a little moment to come and look at it."

Meyran, my favorite orderly, always cleaned the basins on the door-step where he could watch the sky, and tell me when an aeroplane from the camp not far from us was performing feats worth watching or a Boche observer flew so low one could see the black cross on the wings. He also knew how much I liked to see the sunset, after the dreary sameness of the wards, and the flatness of the surrounding country, which made everything seem so small and insignificant. There is something about flat

country which enhances the beauty of sunsets. I suppose the total lack of anything beautiful in this place allows the sun to set with no detracting competition. It always rested me to gaze into that enchanted space, radiating joy unspoiled by "the thunder and moaning of war." Sometimes, the whole sky was misty with pastel colors, and sometimes the heart of the west burned like a great open fireplace. How I would have appreciated a blazing wood-fire in the drafty ward instead of the little round stoves that made so much dirt and so little heat!



## CHAPTER V

### LIFE AT THE FRONT

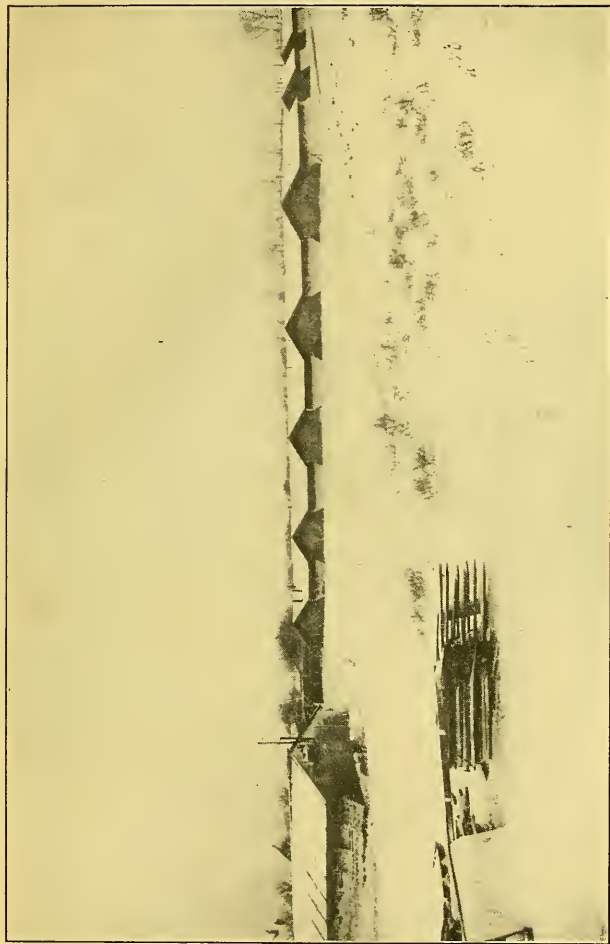
LET no one trained in a big New York hospital suppose we had a furnace to heat the wards or our own rooms or running water and bathrooms. We had barely the necessities for a hospital. Our buildings, being temporarily constructed, were little protection against the snowy weather of December.

The cold was penetrating and more painful than sunny, dry zero weather in New York. The wind blew down the stovepipes, putting out the fires, and almost tearing the roof off. Snow sifted into the ward through cracks in the ceiling and around the windows. I had to rearrange the beds every day, pulling them into the centre at all angles to avoid drips, giving the room a demoralized aspect. Every blessé had a

cold. The "caporal" whittled a stick for me to use when I painted chest after chest with iodine each night. They did not like to see my fingers stained, as they always were when I took the cotton or a compress in my hands. So I flourished the stick like an artist's brush, and amused them by starting off with initials or a picture. Those unavoidably in drafts had bed-socks of various colors on their heads. I envied them in their beds like hibernating animals, snuggled under nine heavy blankets.

My hands would become quite lifeless as I made the tour of temperatures the first thing on a cold morning, or held icy bottles for the doctors as they did the dressings. When I tried to warm my numb fingers by literally placing them upon the stove, the blessés would cry out in protest and rub them warm for me so I would not have "engelures."

I dreaded each trip to my little room, for the back door was opened so often by the



The hospital in winter.

Our buildings, being temporarily constructed, were little protection against the snowy weather of December.



orderlies on their various errands that the floor was a sheet of ice, and yet I had to stay there a great part of the time to prepare the dressing-carriage, sterilize needles and syringes, clean instruments, make drinks, and enter the doctors' orders for treatments, dressings, and operations, the arrivals and departures of the blessés and to which équipe each belonged, neatly in French in a note-book kept open for the night nurse to add her remarks. How I would have appreciated hoofs! My ungloved hands were a pathetic purple, and in spite of the blessés' care, often cracked and bleeding, and my nose was a most unbecoming red. I wore two pairs of heavy stockings and stuffed cotton inside my tennis-shoes, which kept popping out at the sides like a fringe or the pads horses are given when they interfere. And yet through everything I had to keep up the morale of my ward. I had read somewhere about "hospital wards, cheerful and pleas-

ant, with trim, nice-looking girls as nurses, whose air of coquetry was deemed helpful to the patient." This was more difficult than one would suppose, but the blessés helped a lot. In fact, I was never quite sure whether I was taking care of them or they of me.

The first time I helped at a dressing, a little boy of seventeen, known as "le Petit Parisien," because he was typical of his birthplace, saved me from uttering a cry of horror and running away. He was one of the happiest in the ward, and seemed to be quite free from suffering or worry. Therefore the shock came unexpectedly when I first took off his bandage and revealed a right hand frightfully mangled from which the fingers hung down fastened by a mere thread. He held it up without a quiver for the doctor to dress, and when he saw my expression, though there were tears in his eyes, he smiled at me reassuringly.

“Monsieur le Coiffeur” could not forget his original profession, though he had served three years as “maréchal des logis,” he always informed me in a distressed tone when my veil had slipped to one side or had some of the black from the stovepipe on it. They made so much fun of my comfortable, rubber-soled shoes, that I only dared wear them on the coldest days when they were more lenient in their discipline. I considered myself responsible for the morale of my ward and took it as a personal affront when any one had the “ca-fard.” During the harrowing moments when the doctors were doing most painful dressings, I tried to wear a mask of cheerfulness as I gave the doctor compress after compress to cover a large expanse of mangled flesh, or poured ether or “mencièrè” on the wound. I did not want them to see in my face how serious and horrible it was.

Perhaps my great sympathy for them and longing to keep them from suffering

atoned for my inexperience. I was not treated as a novice and was grateful for the impression given to the blessés that I had done it all many times. It gave me confidence. When in doubt about anything, I would admit "I must ask the doctor," using the feeble excuse that "things are so different in America."

In England or America, I would not have been up to the standard, but in France I was better equipped after my two months' apprenticeship than most of the French "infirmières" and "ministérielles," for it seems only English-speaking races have professionally trained nurses. The work in French hospitals has been done chiefly by the English, and the Frenchwomen who have given up other occupation to answer the needs of the country, but who are as new to the work as voluntary workers like those in our unit. There is so much to be done, and so few really strong enough to do it or able to support themselves. Trained



nurses are rather scornful and sceptical in their remarks about untrained aides being sent to the front, but if they are unable to give their services without pay the work must be done by those who can and are willing to learn, and do as they are told. Otherwise some of the blessés would be left to the orderlies, who are not very clean or conscientious. Trained nurses are only going on with their usual work with an added zest and excitement given by foreign service and war, but no one should criticise those who give their services, and sometimes their lives, for a work to which they are not accustomed. Many women are slaving night and day who never knew what it was to suffer a discomfort. French countesses who were helpless without a personal maid have turned up their sleeves and dressed wounds reeking with the unbearable odor of gangrene poisoning. Doctor Carrel, the famous surgeon of the Rockefeller Institute, who has been promoted

by the French Government to the rank of Commander of the Legion of Honor for his discoveries of methods of blood transfusion, conservation of living tissue, grafting bones, and treating wounds, which have been of such universal benefit to the wounded, has praised the work of voluntary nurses highly. His own nurses are Swiss "bénévoles."

When the American Red Cross did send some professional army nurses to help during an attack, the "médecin-chef" sent them away, saying they were only "lemon-trees standing in the wards." They could not speak French and refused to take temperatures as we had been doing all the time. Triumph for the untrained nurses, even if I do say so when I should be modest ! However, it is something to be proud of to be able to aid a doctor willingly and unquestioningly wherever one is needed and to care for wounded with tact and sympathy that comes from culture if not

with trained professional skill. The need in our hospital was so great that I had to give hypodermic injections and do some of the dressings, which American aides and English V. A. D.'s are not allowed to do even after months of hospital experience. During my apprenticeship I was sometimes left alone in the ward, so it was not very hard a little later to have charge of one of my own.

For a while I had a maid to help me as well as the caporal and two orderlies, but I preferred to give the baths and make the beds myself. Though they were her own countrymen, she was rough and careless and refused to do anything but sit around on the beds on Sunday and gossip. When I reminded her that if men could be wounded on Sunday they could be taken care of as well, she flounced out of the room saying I was "too young to give orders." I never let her come back again. The blessés complained that she had only bothered, walk-

ing so heavily it hurt their wounds, and talking so much.

I never had a regular "day off," nor did any one in our unit. We went on duty at eight o'clock each morning, with two hours off in the middle of the day for a walk and lunch, but if there was a great deal of work to be done, we would only take a half-hour. The English always made time for tea, but that was my hour for temperatures and doctors' visits. We left the wards at seven o'clock, when night duty began.

One of us did night duty for a week alone, being replaced in her ward or daytime work so she could rest. In busy times two of us would take the same night, one until midnight, the other after midnight. If there are many new arrivals and much operating, the night nurse calls for assistance, and whoever is in charge of the operating-room hurries over to help the surgeon on guard. Usually night duty consists in making a tour

of the wards every two hours to give the Carrel injections or other treatments and hypodermics ordered, recording what she has done in the book kept by the nurse in charge of each ward. It takes courage to go on duty all alone at night in the dark with only a flash-light or lantern. Bombardments often occur, and there are more deaths than in the daytime.

The shed in which our unit is billeted is near the road, where we can see the troops passing by like a river of gray steel helmets. The French troops march silently, except for their heavy boots clumping along the hard road, but I often longed for the sound of a military band to drown out the continuous noise of the traffic. Armed motors and the big guns rattled by, mingling their din with the heavily lumbering motor-lorries, the clattering hoofs of the packed horses, and tooting horns of staff cars that shot past at top speed. They would billet in our little village, so one day the streets

would be filled with picturesque "Blue Devils," and the next with a swarthy Algerian regiment. Sometimes young boys would be brought in to the hospital from the trenches, and other times the wards would fill up with gray-haired men.

When we did have time for a short walk, it was like stepping into an illustrated Sunday paper or into a *Pathé Weekly* of "Somewhere in France." Behind us on the road and ahead of us were millions of men in blue, almost the same height. It seemed unreal, like a stage-setting with ruins on every side, and yet we were actually in it, marching along with men who would soon be in the first-line trenches. From a distance the long, monotonous roll of artillery, like surf beating on the seashore, made it all too real.

It always seems to rain at the front, as if the desolate plains and dreary boom of the cannon and continual sight of suffering are not enough to make one realize there

is war close by. In cross-country walks one sometimes stumbles against piles of shells, evidently forgotten, concealed in the most unexpected places. I found a *croix de guerre* in the ruins of a town. The ribbon was faded, and the dates were 1914-1916 with a star. Having no way to identify the man who had earned it, I could not return it to his family.

One day, when the French were preparing to attack, we heard that there were some tanks in a field not far from us. Every one stole a few minutes from work to see them. I was fortunate enough to go with a nurse who had been decorated by the general of the *blessés* in her ward with a "*croix de guerre fourragère*." Through her influence we were admitted to the meadow where about fifty tanks were stationed. The officer on guard let us climb into one of the middle-sized ones, which looked like a big green frog with its camouflage of mottled green, and guns peering out at each side like eyes.



In it we went down-hill into the mud and climbed up again.

That evening the captain of the tanks had dinner with us, being a cousin of Madame G——. Our one recreation consisted in staying up late and entertaining officers on their way through Cugny after our day's work was done. The splendid gold braid of their uniforms contrasted oddly with our poor dining-room.

Lunch and dinner (or dinner and supper — I never was sure which was which) were served in a wooden hut similar to those used as wards, except that it was divided into three parts: one-third for the “*femmes de ménage*” (maids who did our housework and helped in the wards), one part for kitchen, presided over for a time by a real chef from the Ritz, who had come to us wounded and was kept as cook during his prolonged convalescence until the gendarmes arrested him for bigamy. We did not care how many wives he had, if he



could only have stayed with us, cleverly disguising the poor quality of the food with his delicious sauces.

The last and largest part was our dining-room. A long wooden table with a long wooden bench on each side, and an arm-chair for the "directrice" at the end, give the impression of a refectory, until we are all there. Then it becomes the wildest scene of confusion. We have no table manners, and startle our guests by repeatedly rising from the table. In one corner is a stove on which we make toast as we eat, climbing over the back rail of the bench frequently to see how it is coming along. We heat over what has chilled if we are late, or run out to the kitchen to see whether the maids are having better food than we are, which is often the case. Whereupon we bring it back with us and put it down proudly in front of the officer of highest rank. All around the walls are large crates and packing-cases of food in tins, and hospital-sup-

plies, beyond which and overhanging them, out of reach, are shelves of books and magazines. The windows look almost too civilized and pathetically dainty with their chintz curtains.

Work and the open air that penetrates our walls as if we were living outdoors make us hungry even for the monotonous diet of a military hospital. Tinned food, horse-meat, red wine that tastes like vinegar, mouse-trap cheese — we are so hungry we eat it all. If the soup is even more tasteless than usual, we grate cheese into it or make it snappy with a touch of Worcestershire sauce. If the pudding is the same we have been eating for two meals a day, week after week, month after month, we dress it up with a cover of jam. What would we ever do without jam? Three times a day we spread it over uneatable bread and forget that it is gray instead of white, and that we noticed sawdust in the crust.

When there are guests a special effort is made. Some one goes to the nearest town and brings back cakes, *pâté de foies gras*, and champagne. But the table is always set in the same manner: two white enamel plates, one on top of the other; a knife, fork, and spoon. This and nothing more for the whole meal. It takes skilful management to put the right things together. You must finish every bit of your soup, for the meat and potatoes will taste better on that plate than the pudding will on the same plate with the vegetables. Each one keeps her napkin in a little linen bag hanging behind her part of the bench, and usually keeps it indefinitely, forgetting to send it with the rest of the laundry.

We are billeted in a hut like the ward, with paper ceilings (full of mice) instead of wood, and windows of yellow paper instead of glass. No one opened these windows at night. There was no need with the wind blowing up through the cracks in the floor.

Instead, we shut them tighter with cotton stuffed along the cracks. Each one has a little space of her own with sheets for walls, so that the general impression on opening the door is of a Pullman done in white. Our rooms were quite cheerful with bright-colored chintz concealing trunks, shelves, and rows of hooks, and a blanket on the floor for a rug. After the war I shall never want to see a trunk, after living without unpacking ever since I got on the steamer.

For furniture we have wooden tables, camp-stools, an electric light, and a gas-mask. Some of us had had experience camping out, but we had never roughed it in snowy weather. We stood it very well, not even getting tonsillitis, bronchitis, or grippe, as one does in steam-heated houses. I suppose we were all in good condition when we came, after living in comfortable homes, well nourished.

I don't believe in the strict army system of giving the men so many hardships be-

fore they are sent to the front. It may harden some of them, but it weakens others who might otherwise escape illness if they had arrived in perfect condition in the war zone, instead of being worn out needlessly with poor food and discomfort. Every one who has to go under fire should have all the care and comfort he can get before he comes way out here. He needs all his reserve strength and nerves intact for the strain. However, my business is to take care of the soldiers afterward and not before.

Sometimes, though tired, I have gone to a party, spurred on by the prospect of different food (I must admit) more than entertainment. One night the French commandant of an ambulance section stationed in our vicinity sent his car for those of us who had been invited for dinner at his poste. Even the cold ride was a treat after being housed for a long time. We dined in the cellar of a ruined château and could hear the guns plainly. The walls were crum-

bling. One of them had fallen only the day before and killed a man.

The dining-room was decorated with pictures from illustrated papers. Bathing-suits were the last things I had expected to see out there. I sat between a prince chauffeur and an American "Loot" (giving him his own rendering of his rank). Neither of them having a thing in common, not even language, only their work, which one does not discuss at parties, I was glad when we began to sing. Such strange connections and acquaintances are formed at the front. All sorts of people you would never meet at home are so friendly and sympathetic. There is a mutual interest and respect that I have found nowhere else.

On All Souls' Day, "le jour des morts," we placed fresh flowers upon the little graves in the cemetery near our hospital. They were surrounded by a railing of painted wood. Over each grave was a cross, hung with a fancifully decorated wreath

and an identity disc and "tricolore" in the centre, and sometimes the képi, coat, and boots. It did not seem pathetic or sad, but a fine thing that they should be lying there at rest in their native soil which they had tried to defend with their lives.

From there we went by camion to a lonely hilltop near Flavy-le-Martel. Here the American aviator McConnell, who wrote "Flying for France," was buried where he fell when shot by the enemy. A monument with parts of his aeroplane and gun commemorated the spot, in the midst of what had once been a large apple-orchard. Every tree had been systematically cut down by the Germans in their retreat, the branches pointing in the same direction, like rows of graves.



## CHAPTER VI

### AN ATTACK

THERE is a maid who brings us hot water and breakfast. Not the polite third-person kind that says deferentially "Madame est servie," but a comedian of the May Vokes variety — only more so. She starts off noisily in all directions at once, arriving nowhere in time, singing loudly or telling herself what chore she is going to do next, though in spite of her own constant reminder she invariably forgets to do it. "O quelle horreur!" she cries, when she does anything awkward, which is most of the time.

Nevertheless, I like Germaine, the much-abused, for she has a big heart. In this atmosphere of efficiency in which I am living there is little time for feelings, and I was drawn to Germaine when I found



her huddled up on the floor by the stove crying over a dead cat. In return for a few kind words I am one of the favored few who breakfast in bed, and how I appreciate a hot drink before I have to get up and dress in a place colder than outdoors because there is no sun. I burned my face and froze my back trying to get less cold, my one consolation being the fact that I could not get any colder. I would never get warm enough to catch a chill. However, the thought of the men in the trenches pulled me through the coldest weather and made my hardships unimportant.

I acquired strange habits of stowing my clothes under the covers every night, and postponing a bath for the middle of the day when one could thaw out a little and begin to feel one's feet again after hobbling painfully about on them all morning. Even then it was hardly a bath, for the rubber tub was too small. It tipped over so easily that it was safer to take it to an empty room near

the big stove that kept the water heated for all of us. It was warmer here, but one had to hurry, for Louis was always coming in to keep the fire going, and you could only lock the door by pinning the sheets together and shouting "Don't come in!" whenever you heard his manly tread.

Germaine was supposed to waken me at seven o'clock, but usually arrived at half past or later, calling cheerily: "Seven o'clock." The French always lie if they think it will give more happiness than telling the truth. When she is too busy to toast the impossible war-bread, she does one side anyway. The coffee is boiled and quite tasteless, with a lump of condensed milk at the bottom of the cup. I never get that far, and am consequently very hungry when lunch-time comes. This coffee and the bath will keep me modest when after the war I may think myself extraordinary. The memory of these humble details will save me from becoming insufferable.

One morning Germaine burst into my room, pulling the sheet wall apart in a place that was not the doorway and upsetting my wash-stand. She seemed more flurried than usual, if such a thing were possible.

“Good morning, Mademoiselle,” she began hastily, tripping over the blanket rug and putting my breakfast-tray under my chin with a plunge. “Listen! Do you hear? It is the French who attack to-day. Poor boys! You can hear the glorious seventy-fives! Quelle horreur! Will this frightful war never end! Now I must get the hot water for Madame de B——.”

When wide awake, I could plainly hear the peculiar bark of the “glorious seventy-fives,” and could distinguish the “arrivés” from the “départs.” During my hasty dressing, a strong cannonade shook the barracks, and made the stovepipes creak. Many new faces, or what remained of faces, greeted me when I entered the ward.

“Beaucoup d’entrants !” said the caporal, looking sadly at the new arrivals.

“We need more aluminum for our rings and ‘briquets,’” said Jean Biscay, as he worked away at his handicraft of making little cigarette lighters and rings out of pieces of old shell. “‘Messieurs les Boches’ are filling our order now.”

The ward was very quiet all day out of respect to the “entrants” who were in great pain and needed rest and sleep. Several hemorrhages had to be stopped, and many poor souls crying from shock and exhaustion had to be comforted. The work was heavy and I had to be several places at once, and do many things at the same time. The orderlies and “Begonias” were a valuable assistance and, thanks to them, no one was neglected.

All day the roar of artillery shook the wooden building. All day the stretcher-bearers shuffled in and out of the ward carrying men to and from the operating-

room. Some of my walking delegates were sent into another ward, where there was no nurse, only orderlies, to make room for those who needed more attention. Sometimes the brancardiers left their burdens on the floor, and hurried back to the operating-room, or triage, where ambulance after ambulance arrived leaving more and more wounded. There they would lie until the orderlies had time to lift them into a bed, which I was making while its former occupant collected his things to move out. At last the ward was full, and still the brancardiers appeared with their stretchers and the caporal or I had to turn them away: "Pas de place."

There seemed to be every kind of wound except an aseptic one. Most of the dressings were done in the ward, several doctors of different équipes often arriving at the same time and adding greatly to the general confusion. There were many hypodermics to be given to stimulate those who

had lost a great deal of blood or needed to be braced up after their operation. The gassed cases had an oxygen inhalation every five minutes from a Zeppelin-shaped bag. The most serious gassed cases were sent to the "malades," where fourteen died in one day. Cradles had to be placed over mangled limbs to keep the blankets from pressing too heavily. Swollen faces full of bits of shrapnel had to be washed gently. Some of the mouths were full of blood, and the eyes of one man had to be pushed in again now and then. There were men whose hair was gray at thirty-five, and boys younger than I with faces of old men. The German shells must have been poisoned, as the men had all received prompt attention at the "poste de secours" in the front lines before coming to us, where they were immediately operated, and yet several amputations were necessary on account of gangrene.

I am always afraid to tell them, but wait for the doctor to break the sad news when

they have sufficiently recovered. Some of the men tell sad stories. One "fusilier" said he did not mind losing his leg.

"There is no one to care, Mademoiselle," he explained with a quiet desperateness. "One time I had a wife so devoted that the first year of this miserable war she dressed in man's clothes and came to see me at the camp, just before I went into the trenches. But that is over. The war was too long. She grew tired of being always alone. The waiting bored her. She is now with a Spaniard who makes munitions and money, while I fight and lose my leg and get little pay. It is the war, Mademoiselle, and one must not expect justice. There is nothing but death to look forward to."

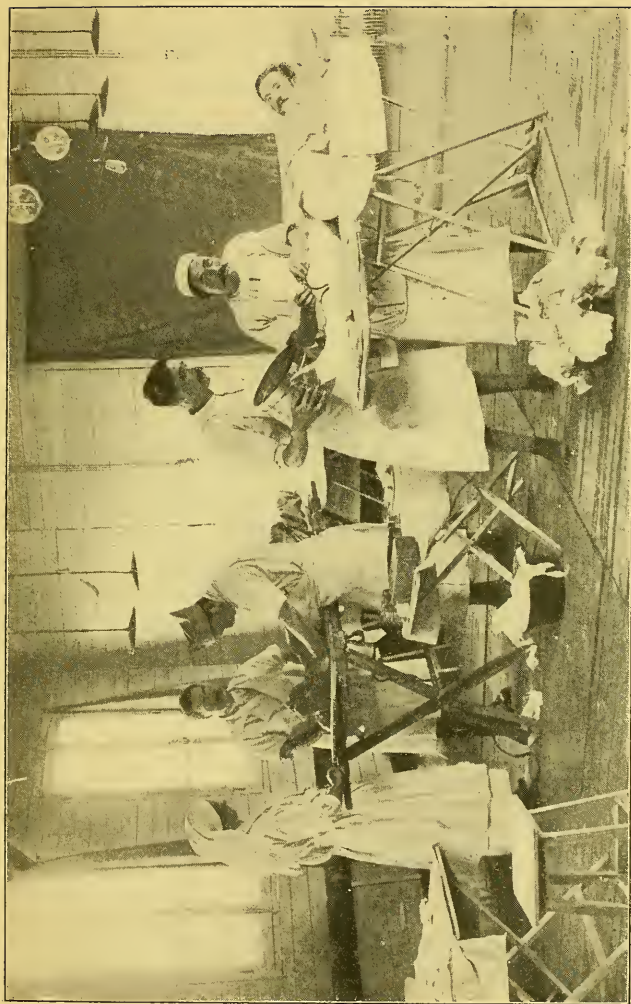
He was only thirty-two, and though wasted, his hands were well shaped, and his face was still good-looking, with sensitive mouth and refined features. He was very talkative and feverish after his operation. It seems he enlisted as a private for socialis-



tic reasons. How abruptly war cut him off from a career and happy home life! And how many others like him! So many had wives; even the boys of seventeen wore wedding-rings proudly, and all waited anxiously for the daily visit of the "vaguemestre" with his letters and parcels.

For a field-hospital, the installation is quite complete, though rudimentary. The compound fractures with open wounds are suspended in Doctor Blake's apparatus. Most of the doctors use Doctor Carrel's system of irrigating the wounds. The apparatus consists of a glass flask of one litre, filled with a solution of Dakin, and fastened to a post attached to a part of the bed nearest the wound. A long rubber tube attached to the lower opening of the flask is joined to the ends of the drains by little glass tubes. The drains are perforated different lengths (5, 10, or 15 cm.) and from one to four are used according to the size of the wound. One end is tied with a string





Dressings in the "salle de pansements."

Most of the doctors use Doctor Carrel's system of irrigating the wounds.



so the solution may distribute itself instead of going right through. There is a metal clasp on the long tube to keep the liquid from flowing except when necessary, every two hours, when it is opened for as many seconds as there are drains. The idea is to keep the wound disinfected by keeping it moist.

If a man has several wounds to be treated in this way at the same time, the same flask may be used with several connecting tubes joined to the main one, or his bed can be surrounded by posts in convenient places, making it look very festive with two or three pink balloons around.

Assisting at the dressings is the most interesting part of my work. It is like a game of jackstraws, picking up each instrument and handing it to the doctor without touching anything. At first the sight of the wound and the suffering of my own blessés, a moment before so cheerful, and now in such agony, was hard for me to watch, but soon

I became so absorbed in the dressing, and in giving the doctors the various things they asked for in French, things I had never seen or heard of before, that it took my mind off the pain of the blessé and the horror of the open wound. I was too busy to think. No anæsthetic is given, although some of the dressings are almost operations. Pieces of tissue or ligaments are sometimes cut away, sending a man out of his head with the pain. When several dressings are going on at the same time, the ward is almost unbearable with the cries and moans and the abominable odor of gangrene. The doctors are usually very gentle, even when rushed during a day of attack, and talk to the blessé as they work, calling him "*môn pauvre vieux*." Bits of clothing, mud, and even flowers are taken out of some of the wounds as well as shrapnel and jagged bits of shell.

The carriage must be furnished with sterilized instruments and supplies enough

for several doctors and dressings at a time. Afterward there are blood-stained instruments to wash, maybe one with a piece of skull fastened tightly to a jagged edge of the instrument, a piece of some trepanned head that will ever after be half-witted because of the loss of that little scrap of bone.

However, I would not care to be in the "salle de pansements," where dressings are done all day in rapid succession. It would be worse than an operating-room, where, no matter how terrible the work may look, the man is not suffering, but under an anæsthetic. In the ward there are so many different things to keep me busy and occupy my mind. There are moments when everything happens at once, as on the day of an attack, extra work as well as the daily routine.

When the Carrel treatment is used, the wound is washed with a solution of Dakin, or a liquid soap containing zinc, lime, and glycerine. Sometimes chloramine paste is

used at the dressing for a day or two, eliminating the necessity for the two-hourly injections. The wound is then covered with vaseline compresses, which can be removed without tearing, and large pads of both kinds of cotton, the absorbent next the wound and the non-absorbent on the outside. These are held in place by moist bandages or a wide bandage pinned around the body if the wound is in the back or abdomen.

The solution of Dakin is a powerful disinfectant, as it succeeds in cleaning wounds even when the dressing is not done in proper Carrel style. I have sometimes noticed drains put in with the perforations on the outside, so that although some of the solution soaks through to the wound, most of it stays in a puddle in the bed. Often the two kinds of cotton are not arranged correctly. When done in the right way, it takes only four days to disinfect a fresh wound and fifteen for an old one.

On the day of an attack the poverty and shortcomings of our hospital become more apparent. When my blessés write me from other hospitals that they are not as well taken care of as at Cugny, that the beds and food are not as good, I am surprised and anxious about them. Sometimes our poverty is appalling. I have seen horses that had better blankets than those on the beds in our wards. When the laundry-machine, which is in Compiègne, quite far away, breaks, we go weeks without clean linen for the men. Sheets are only changed when there is a great emergency, not when they are gray with cigarette ashes or dirt from those who insist upon walking barefooted about the ward. There is a small reserve supply in the emergency ward when this shortage of laundry occurs, kept especially for the "grands blessés" who have hemorrhages, or wounds of such a nature that their beds must be changed several times a day.



The highest proof of the French civilization is found in the characters of these blessés, farmers, taxi-drivers, plain working men, simple country boys, who are never too hurt or too faint to murmur their thanks for every small attention. If they thought I was tired they would say they were perfectly comfortable instead of having their beds made over, or an alcohol rub, or any little comfort. In the midst of torture and death they are still cheerful and unselfishly try to help their "camarades." Hot-water bags, little pillows for filling up uncomfortable places in the bed, and special luxuries, of which there is but a scant supply, are quickly offered to the latest "entrant" or "opéré" when they are carried in delirious or moaning with ether or pain. Even those who would rather read quietly or sleep, would let the "phono" play noisily by their bedside for the pleasure of the others, if I did not take it away. Instead of making men brutal, war seems to



have made them very gentle and kind to one another.

I was hurrying back to supper after the busy day of the attack when the nurse in the emergency ward stopped me on the way past her door.

"Oh, please stay in my ward a few minutes," she begged in a distracted way. "The orderlies have not come back from their supper, and I have to tell the doctor about one poor man who is dying. I can't leave the ward alone. Do watch them until I get back. It won't be long, and you'll help a lot."

The "salle d'urgence" was even a more depressing sight than my ward had been. In the faint light, the men looked ghostly. There was no sound but an occasional moan or cry. Now and then a delirious blessé would lean forward in his bed and shout imaginary orders, or some one else would begin whispering softly, supposing his wife was there. Except for these mo-

ments, the suffering goes on silently with lips set tightly together and sad, patient eyes alone showing what pain there is behind the stoicism. Most of them had several wounds, abdominal, pierced skulls, lungs shot through, and compound fractures of the legs. When one man had several of these, there hardly seemed enough flesh left to keep him together. They were kept alive with numerous injections of saline solutions, camphorated oil, ether, and strychnia. Often it was hard to find a place to insert the tiny needle, so covered was the body with bandages, iodine stains, and holes where former injections had been given. Many of the wounds necessitated a change of dressing, and the whole bed remade every few hours. Another man had a chest wound, the dressings of which had to be undone and ether injected every four hours. Though the nurse of this ward was assisted by a maid and three orderlies, she had more to do with twenty beds than I

had without a maid and forty-six. Each of these men could have kept a nurse busy by himself if only to supply his constant requests for a drink.

There was nothing special for me to do but watch that no one fell out of bed, so I sat by the stove and read about each case. Some of the wounds were so indescribably horrible and numerous that for the poor blessé's sake, I almost hoped that he would not survive. Now and then I got a drink for some feverish one or held the hand of a delirious poilu who thought he was a general. The warmth of mine or the electricity that goes from one being to another seemed to calm him, and he would drift off to sleep.

The man who was dying was the most pathetic case of all. His body was perfect, and he of all the mangled ones should have been allowed the precious gift of life. Six feet, of strong build, he lay tied in bed with an ice-bag over his head which he

was trying to push away. His hands and arms became so purple and marked where they were tied, I had to unfasten them, preferring to stand over and watch that no harm come. An "abri" had fallen on his head and he was evidently trying to remove it. It was dreadful to stand there and watch him dying, powerless to help him. Whoever discovers a cure for shock will give something marvellous to the world. This man died a few hours after I left.

## CHAPTER VII

### UNDER FIRE

THE electric switch that lights our sleeping-barracks is turned off at ten o'clock, so that silence is enforced as rigorously at that hour as at a boarding-school or in Berlin. Not a whisper was heard, only the occasional turning of a page or crackle of a paper showing that some sleepless one was trying to read by candle-light. In the bitter winter weather, when the cold hurt so one could not sleep right away no matter how exhausted, B—— and I pulled the dividing sheet away from between our beds and made chocolate, pantomime fashion, in the middle of the night. Our “directrice” teased us afterward in Paris by telling every one that she was kept awake every night at the front, not by bombs but by the continual stirring

of chocolate. However, she took pity on us now and then, when December was at its coldest and the four little stoves were making much soot but no heat, and sent us to bed with something more potent to make us sleep. I have skated at home in zero weather against a biting wind, but I never felt as cold as I did that winter in the Aisne. We were always pushing our beds to a dry part of the room, away from the snow that sifted in. I wore more clothes at night than in the daytime, when, unfortunately, I had to look civilized.

It is hard to say which was more uncomfortable, the cold which was always with us or the bombardments which happened now and then. When troops were passing through on their way to the firing-line, a Taube observer would report their position to the air-raid authorities; or when the moonlight enabled them to see the position of the ammunition centres on either side of our hospital, or just without any

special reason, the enemy planes would fly over our heads and drop bombs.

The first time they came since my arrival in the war zone I was glad to stay under the covers and my bed seemed a safe, pleasant island in a wild, storm-swept sea. The noise was most alarming, like a thousand thunderstorms, and the clamor of the maids in the next barracks added to the terrifying sensation of being under fire. Our windows were covered with heavy black curtains so the room was absolutely dark. I tried to pretend I was at a play. There was something sheltering about the darkness, like a heavy curtain wrapped around to hide and protect one.

The bombs seemed to be right overhead, and the sky full of screeching, swishing whiz-booms and whangs. Between the crash of a bomb, one could hear the pop-pop of the "mitrailleuses" on the aeroplanes, showing that the French were there to protect us, and more distant the loud

boom of the antiaircraft guns with their questioning "Warum?" The aeroplanes were so low over our heads that we could hear, in rare pauses, the hum of their engines, even distinguishing the French from the German. The patter of shrapnel on our roof like rain made it seem all too realistic for a play.

The next night my curiosity made me get up and watch from underneath a bit of overhanging roof. It is really the noise that terrifies. It was a wonderful though dreadful sight. The sky was full of signal-rockets and star-shells. Three big search-lights pointed right over our heads, groping now and then like arms, but returning ever to the same place above us. The bombs came with a loud crash and the "éclairants" shells burst with a blaze of light.

On a moonlight night when the ground is covered with snow, a bombardment has a terrible beauty like giant fireworks. The stars mingle with the rockets and star-



shells and signal-lights. The noise of the unseen antiaircraft cannon and machine-guns on the planes are like thunder in the mountains. It seems as if all the sky were alive and fighting a war too big for man to finish.

There is an exaltation about being under fire. The realization that any minute may be the last, that each crash may mean the end of life, makes one full of a desire to work hard with a final burst of energy to make up for past years of idleness and the things one might have done, making the last part of life at least worth while. There is even a gladness and pride that one's own courage and skill are being used at such a time of danger and need.

One can grow so accustomed to the distant cannonading and roll of artillery that they seem to go on like corks popping at a café, or thunder rumbling far away. The uncanny shrieks and deafening bangs of a bombardment are another matter, but

even these noises seem less terrible if one gets up and watches them.

An air battle in daytime is very interesting and so high above and far away that it is not alarming. There may be some danger from falling shrapnel, but nevertheless we go to the door and look up at them. The planes are so high we can only see the puffs of smoke from the "mitrail-leuses," the French puffs being white and the German black. These puffs of exploding shell look like soft, fluffy clouds, and when occasionally one does see the aeroplane, it looks like a dragon-fly. The blessés watch these battles with great excitement, calling out advice and instructions to the aviators.

"There, he goes! He escapes! Stupid, follow him! Look, they leave one French aviator alone with three Boches! What is the matter with them? There, good, they got that Taube! See, he falls! Bravo!"

There are three large observation-balloons

near us, one German and two French. One day one of these French "saucisses" was surrounded by four black puffs of smoke. No French aeroplane came to the rescue and the great balloon began to descend slowly, a mass of flames, with a trail of smoke. The man escaped from his burning elevator in a parachute.

I went to the front lines the night before Christmas in an ambulance. Having heard there would be no attack, we took a road forbidden in daytime, right to the trenches. We went first through the small ruined town Flavy-le-Martel, with its roofless, windowless houses looking like ghosts in the snow. Here and there chimneys rose against the dark, moonless sky, like arms reaching for help. The next little ruined village was Jussy, chiefly remarkable for its camouflage hanging over the river and along its banks like banners of "Welcome to Our City" or "Vote for Wilson."

Something of that first strange thrill that

had been with me when I began nursing at the front, but which had slowly vanished through the blessing of getting used to things and being constantly among people who took it all as a matter of course, began to return and seize me with renewed vigor as we sped nearer and nearer to the German lines. Something stronger than my will had adapted me to my new life, and I could not feel above a certain level. I had come to the conclusion that seeing so much that was hideous and horrible and feeling sorry to the utmost extent of my capacity had made me immune to any future excitement or enthusiasm. But out here something stirred and quickened my heart again, and I was glad to feel a thrill of excitement. I forgot that I was tired and that the ambulance bumped along uncomfortably, that the cold wind was piercing through all covering.

After passing the village of Montescourt we entered a strange, unnatural country,

quite empty. There was no stir, because there was nothing to stir. It reminded me of the poem of "The Walrus and the Carpenter":

"You could not see a cloud, because  
No cloud was in the sky;  
No birds were flying overhead—  
There were no birds to fly."

The snow stretched away into the distance on every side like the Great Salt Lake, melting into the horizon in an indistinguishable mist of land and sky. It was such an endless expanse of blank whiteness that it made one feel at the end of life or the beginning of eternity. One seemed about to fall over the edge of the world into nothing but space.

It was a land cut off from the rest of the world. Somewhere people were still dressing up and going to parties and worrying about the stocks. But here there was no past or future, nothing but space and shell-holes.

We did not go into the trenches, as it was forbidden for nurses to ride to the front lines in ambulances, and we were not disguised except for the fur caps we wore instead of veils. But we did get out and look at the shell-holes, and learned the difference between a hole twenty feet wide made by what the Tommies call a Jane (12-inch) and a "Jack Johnson," and one known as a "Woolly," deep enough to drown a man.

On the way back we passed dreary columns of troops returning from the trenches. I felt so sorry for those other lines of men trudging out to relieve them. Stiff with cold, even in the car, tired and aching from a big day's work and the jolting ride, I wondered if anything was worth all this. It seemed so futile, all this struggling and misery in order that one army of frozen men could take some snowy, uncomfortable holes in the ground away from another army, equally wretched, fighting for acres

of snow! It was, as Barbusse says, "one great army committing suicide."

I could understand why Joffre's men stayed by their fires in spite of the advance of the Germans. Our barracks were such a cold prospect to return to, that I believe if I had seen a big roaring fire on the German side of that cold, white plane, I would have walked right up to it and refused to leave until I had thawed out thoroughly for the first time since winter came.

I wondered if the war was trying to turn the world into a dead, burnt-up place like the moon. And yet overhead were the same stars that I had watched with such faith on the steamer only a few months ago. Only a few months, and yet how long it seemed and how little I had then known of war! The very thought of my blind enthusiasm and innocent eagerness made me feel old and very tired.

I had discovered that life so near the roar of the guns and groans of the wounded



was a blind existence. The fatalism of the front is what makes the ghastliness bearable. The past is so very far away and the future so uncertain that there is only the present to cling to and make the most of. It is hard, but you somehow stumble along, "fed up" but "sticking it." Living on the edge of eternity this way raises one's working efficiency to a higher rate. Life increases in value as its moments decrease. When strong men cry and hold your hand like children lost in the dark, you cannot leave them. You must stay and work and comfort and cheer and help all you can until the light comes. It may be your last chance.

Homes and lives may be lost, but while one can serve there is something left to go on living for. Service brings its own peace even in the midst of war. It is the only religion that remains in the suffering. There is no hardening in hospital work if one can only put enough of one's self into the



service. While I work I am as happy as I can be in a world full of fighting and hatred and pain. And yet I couldn't help thinking bitterly as I slipped between icy blankets (sheets had been discarded since the cold weather): "What a Christmas Eve!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### FÊTES

IT is the telling about war work that makes it interesting. At the time it is as tiresome and monotonous as any physical labor carried on day after day. The danger and dreary sameness in which we live force us to seek distraction. We are always looking for entertainment, not so much as a rest and change from the physical strain, but from the nervous tension. As an English officer said:

“War is damn dull, damn dirty, and damn dangerous.”

We could not endure our existence if we did not have the precious gift of forgetting ourselves in laughter. It was almost as hard to be cheerful on days when nothing happened as it was during a bombardment.

It takes so much courage and faith to resist boredom and weariness.

During the coldest weather there was little fighting, most of the new cases being accidents. My "entrants" walked in with blankets over their shoulders and their long bare legs hanging down forlornly from the inadequate shirt given them in the triage when their own clothes had been taken away until necessary. Between arrivals and departures I had more doctors than patients and felt as if my ward were a railroad-station.

There was a rumor that we were to evacuate and that the English would take our part of the front. Our one-sheeted newspaper did not give us the information the people in America were getting each day. And yet we could watch the spirit of the fighting men and hear rumors of action ahead of time and have a wonderful opportunity of watching the greatest spectacular performance in the world from a front

seat, as it were. We were too close for news, so we kept on sending men to the interior, gradually emptying the hospital. The work dragged on.

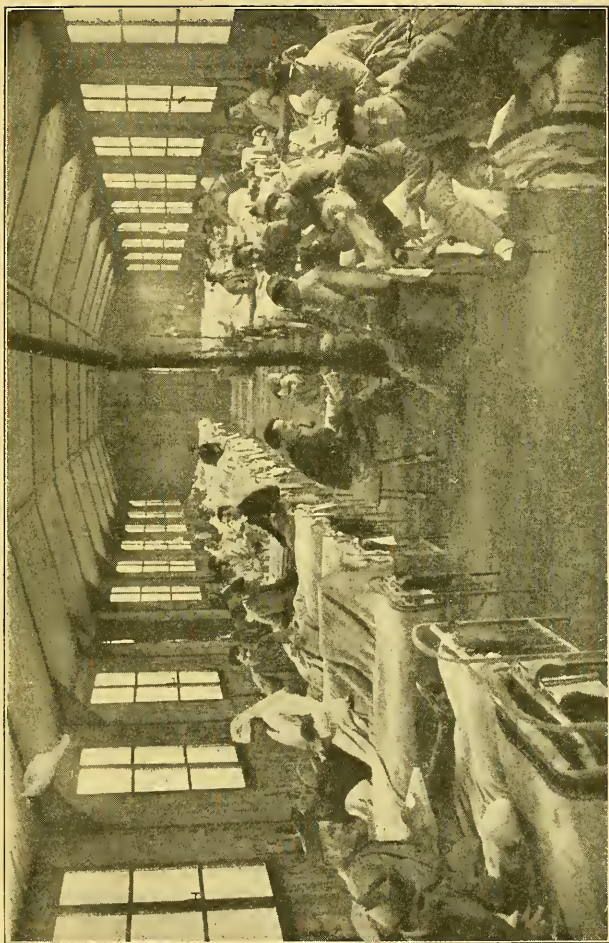
We had only our work and quarrels to talk about. I suppose wherever a few people are gathered together there will be friction. However, when our barracks showed signs of falling apart, and much whispering went on on both sides of the dividing sheet like conspiring criminals, Madame G—— saved the situation by pinning on the door a copy of the sign seen in all railroad trains:

“Taisez-vous ! Méfiez-vous !

“Les oreilles ennemies vous écoutent.”

Our directrice summed up our feelings and situation at this time of coldness and inactivity by saying:

“After the war Joffre and Pétain will be sitting at a little table in a café along the boulevard, telling each other stories of the great war. Suddenly Joffre will stop in the midst of some reminiscence to ask:



Ward V.

We are always looking for entertainment, not so much as a rest and change from the physical strain, but from the nervous tension.



“‘By the way, whatever became of those hospital units you sent up to the Aisne in 1917 with the Third Army?’

“Whereupon Pétain will clasp his forehead and exclaim:

“‘Mon Dieu, I forgot all about them! Do you suppose they are still there?’”

Though I could have taken time off, I preferred to stay in the ward, doing extra work, however unnecessary. I was happier with the *blessés* than anywhere else. They had undertaken to perfect my French, teaching me in various accents. One time a delirious entrant had given an angry cry:

“Oh, there are Boches here!” hitting the air wildly, when I tried to persuade him that he would be more comfortable in bed than on the floor.

Escaping from the danger zone, I told Meyran to watch him, while a “*fil-leul*” in the next bed explained to him that I was not German, and that in a short time

he would grow accustomed to my American accent. When he recovered he began giving me French lessons, as an apology, I suppose. He did not allow me to "sing" or drawl, but made me hurry along staccato, in one tone deep in the throat. The whole ward helped with the matter of gender. I tried to compromise by having one day all masculine and the next feminine, but this did not suit my instructors. Protests of "*la tête*" or "*le lit*" would come from every side, punctuating my attempts at conversation.

Most of the blessés have been decorated with the "croix de guerre" for valor, or the "médaille militaire" (and a pension) for the mutilated ones. This is an impressive ceremony, though it happens so often. Sometimes one man will receive both decorations. The citation is read by the "médecin-chef," followed by a kiss on each cheek. The whole ward compliment the hero, and the walking delegates shake hands with



him. It always makes me rather sad. The two little medals pinned on the patched shirt of some "amputé" do not seem a fair exchange for a leg or an arm. They look sort of cheap. It is the reading of the citation that thrills me. There is a colored man at the Equitable Trust in Paris who told me his son had been missing almost a year. He recited a long citation his son had received for several remarkable deeds, having learned it completely by heart.

The blessés could tell many stories if they wanted to, but they don't. They are past that. Most of them must have had splendid deeds of heroism behind their wounds. Even if there had been time for conversation they were too weak and feverish to have their strength taxed this way for curiosity. Later, when the worst is over, they do not refer to the past. I thought it kinder to help them forget. Others who care less, and were not so busy, can tell the stories. I only want to show the blessés

as I knew them, telling only what I saw and dwelling on the horrible side as little as possible.

Sometimes there is a moving-picture show, and all who can limp or stand the strain of being carried on a stretcher to another part of the hospital are allowed to go. There is much excitement when this happens. The lucky ones go off with so much joy, I felt sorry for those who were left. This is how our concerts started. Of course we had always had "phono fêtes" for a while each afternoon when there were no "entrants" or "opérés." But this went on while I was working, and though I was amused at the absurdity of washing feet to the tune of "Tipperary" or "Old Black Joe," it was not much of "fête" for me. They liked to resurrect old American dance-music for my benefit, and burst out laughing at the nasal twang of our popular vaudeville voices. Little did I realize a few years before, while dancing at a college

prom or Sherry's, that I would be cutting nails (and using both hands, for they were tough) to those same merry dance-tunes.

When the others had gone to the "cinema" there was little for me to do, so I decided to amuse the unfortunate ones who were left behind. I sang to them in Italian, a few Neapolitan street-songs; in English, especially ragtime for the drag and rag pleases them; and in French, their own popular songs and marches, and some American ragtime I heard translated in Parisian vaudevilles. "They Didn't Believe Me" and "Hello, My Dearie," sound almost sensible in a foreign language.

After that, in the evening when no one was in great pain, in the interim between "soupe" and sleep, while I gave the rubs and tucked them in for the night, there would be a concert. It was really a most serious and formal event. Mayou was master of ceremonies, walking up and down the ward commanding order, with a little cane

hooked over the end of his left arm where his hand used to be.

Some of them have very good voices. I like to hear "Monsieur le Cultivateur" sing my favorite selections from Puccini, Massenet, and Saint-Saëns. In spite of my great love of music, these peasants often shame me by their superior knowledge of grand opera.

The "adjudant" sings most dramatic pieces, and almost flings himself out of bed in the excitement of "Le Dernier Tango." François's eyes twinkle wickedly as he sings "Nous avons tous fait ça, Plus ou moins, n'est-ce pas?" or some improper ballad that the French appreciate. I do not understand the most improper, and airs are always pretty, so I do not mind.

Some of the performers have not good voices and yet insist upon taking part. This is often quite trying, especially when it is a "sergent" who wishes to honor us. Their songs are even longer than those

sung by the good voices as if, in defiance of criticism, they would show their superiority in memory if not in musical ability. Nothing will stop them until every verse is done, and some of the popular songs have so many, many verses. If they get hoarse or choke, and are unable to go on, I am summoned and must administer a cure. So in the midst of our *soirée* the sound of gargling is often heard as an interlude. But no one laughs if “*Mon cœur s’ouvre a ta voix*” has strange variations, for, though extempore, this concert is a serious affair. Even I am reprimanded severely by Mayou when I speak, if only to ask if some one is comfortable or am I hurting him by rubbing too vigorously.

I like the marching songs in which the whole ward joins for the chorus: “*Quand Madelon vient nous servir a boire,*” “*Marche Lorraine,*” and “*Paname*” (a sort of Paris “*Tipperary*”). I taught them a French version of “*Over There.*” Some of

them are eager to learn English and like songs that have a few words like "Tout le long de la Tamise." They know a little of "Smile, Smile, Smile," and all of them come in with a "smile" whenever there is a chance. We are rather proud of our chorus, but some one coming in to borrow aspirin, remarked crushingly that she "never heard such a noise, every one in a different key."

*Tant pis !*

They are afraid I will be lonely or bored and treat me with a fatherly solicitude mingled with a kind of awed respect, because I have come such a long way from home across a dangerous ocean, and have settled down so near the front lines. Not being a travelling race like ours, this impresses them a great deal. I am quite a curiosity and source of unfailing interest from my American accent to my American shoes. When I have letters, they are most interested.

"Look, Mademoiselle has a long letter from her fiancé."

"No, no, Pierre, that is the writing of her brother. She gives me the envelopes, for I like to have American stamps."

"Mademoiselle, you have many brothers," said one sceptically.

They wanted to hear about my brothers and the various camps they were in. They were also most anxious about my future, and asked me repeatedly if I had a fiancé, and if I would marry a Frenchman or an American.

When an American ambulance boy was brought into my ward, their excitement was intense. With their love of romance, they looked forward with much interest to what to them was my opportunity.

I tried not to be partial, though it was a relief to speak English again. He had broken his arm cranking a Ford at an ambulance section near us. Bored to death, he roamed around with his right arm in a plaster cast. He was always hungry, and I have to admit that the French food for



wounded is not very substantial for a healthy American appetite, so I smuggled some of my pudding from lunch, and gave him a party hidden away in my little room at the back of the ward, where the blessés could not see that he was being treated better than they were.

He was very popular and made me quite jealous. One blessé claimed him as a friend because he had brought him to the hospital in his ambulance, so they had their meals together at a little table by the stove. C—— could not appreciate his table manners as much as his devotion, and often begged me to sing, especially while the soup was being consumed. He cheered them up and gave them a perpetual “fête,” having a generous supply of cigarettes and crackers. “Monsieur le Valet” gave him French lessons. His favorite amusement was strolling out of the ward and getting the “bran-cardiers” to carry him in on a stretcher. At the cry of “Un entrant!” I would hurry



up with the orderlies, and C—— would roll off on an empty bed to the huge appreciation of the whole ward. Coquelle was so fond of his cough-drops that he munched them continually, even after his operation before he was allowed a drink, and said he didn't care if they made him ill, he liked them.

Sometimes C—— would have visitors from his ambulance section. They would take the place by storm. The "phono" would play and attract some of the younger "aides-majors." One of them had a kind of flute that he whistled through. They asked me to sing "the song that was sung when the *Lusitania* went down," so I got part way through "Nearer, My God, to Thee," until the Americans told me not to be such a gloom. Then we tried the "Star-Spangled Banner" by request, starting three times before we got the pitch that was not a growl at the start, and yet would not take us beyond our powers at the end. It was

not a success, but I redeemed myself by singing all three verses of the "Marseillaise." To be truly patriotic, the Americans present rendered "Dixie" and "Over There." By order of the "major" (I insisted that it be a military command) I danced with several of the guests, to the immense satisfaction and flattering approval of the blessés, and the horror of the caporal, who was a priest.

When any of the visitors came to take pictures, there was a wild scramble for any sort of clothing available. Men that I had thought were beyond caring for anything but sleep and peace would stand around in the snow with long lavender bed-socks pulled up to their knees over faded and patched pajama trousers and a sweater or blanket around them. If they had their képi they could pose happily and with dignity for hours. There were so many demands for pictures that we sometimes had to pretend to take them in order

to get them back to bed. Then some time exposures had to be attempted for those who could not get up, or there would be tears. Such babies, these great bearded godsons of mine!

Sometimes in the evening I wrote letters for those who cannot use their hands. They liked to hear C—— dictating his with a few French expressions. However, it was a little embarrassing having him there, and I was rather relieved when the *médecin-chef* allowed him to be sent to Doctor Blake's in Paris. He had never been in a hospital before, and seemed more human than the French whom I treated like children and thought of as a neuter class of simply *blessés*.

One day, soon after his arrival, C—— had asked me where he could take a bath. When I told him to wait before getting dressed until I came—I would give him the only kind available—he did not look very enthusiastic over the idea, and was not in

the ward when I arrived next day. His doctor was annoyed and muttered something disparaging to the caporal about Americans who never understood military discipline. I was rather worried about his A. W. O. L. Seeing my anxiety, the blessés teased:

“Ah, Mademoiselle, he no longer loves you. You have been too cold and cruel. He has gone away forever.”

At last he appeared in the doorway in his sheepskin coat covered with snow. I hurried up with a scolding.

“Well, you see, Inferior Major,” he began, calling me his interpretation of my explication that I was infirmière-major of that ward, “I just had to get a bath. Yours would have been all right, but I wanted the kind I was used to taking for six sous. Please don’t be cross. I promise never to take another if it’s going to bother you so much.”

The time for the second injection of anti-

tetanus was a trying one, and much dreaded by the victim and me. They all felt that the first "piqûre" received upon their entrance in the triage was enough, and this second one an insult to their present state of recovery and well-being. Camphorated oil or morphia, when ordered by the doctor, were accepted without a murmur, but this antitetanus in the stomach seemed to hurt more. I did not like to give it, and they made matters worse. The walking delegates would run to the other end of the long, narrow ward or hide under the beds. The "Begonias" would help me trace an escaping one, entering the game with great zest, crying, "Here he is! See! Under this bed," as he rolled from one end of the ward to the other, while I pursued him, holding the tray with syringe, compresses, and iodine aloft out of a contact that would unsterilize my work.

Whatever the trials of the day, we would always part friends, and I would leave the

ward at night amid a chorus of "Bonne nuit, Mademoiselle Marraine," and an occasional "Good-by" or "Sleep well." They often say these English words if I leave the ward in the daytime on an errand. They tell me how much my smiles help them, and do not understand that it is they who keep me "toujours gaie, toujours souriante." They are so brave, but one can be wretchedly unhappy while being brave and really would not be brave unless one suffered.

It is in the hospital that the true courage is shown in this war. The old-time tactics and strategy and romance of the sword have been revolutionized by modern inventions. War of movement has practically been replaced by war of position. There is little opportunity for individual heroism and achievement when war is run on such a business basis, with the men fighting like members of a firm trying to put a big deal across. Machinery and poison-gas and

T. N. T. are winning the war. In such a contest, victory will come in the end to the side with the biggest numbers, the largest purse, and the most enduring nerves. But in the hospital the old-time Spartan fortitude and heroic endurance go on every day as each individual fights his own battle against pain.

## CHAPTER IX

### EVACUATION OF AUTO CHIR NO. 7

AS an interruption of the daily routine, we sometimes have an inspection by a general or several generals at once. The caporal warns me when this is to take place and there is a great house-cleaning. The whole ward must be scrubbed and smoothed out, cobwebs swept from the ceiling, every little table overhauled and books, papers, and games put away, all as quickly as possible. The men must stay either in bed or near it, keeping as clean as they can. This is a great strain, as no one knows at what moment the generals will appear. After waiting indefinitely in a painfully immaculate condition, they are apt to arrive inconsiderately at the inauspicious moment



of "soupe," when every one is clamoring for more potatoes, eating noisily, or using a towel or a sleeve instead of the napkin hung beside their bed.

The generals walk slowly through the ward, accompanied by the *médecin-chef* and other privileged officers. Sometimes they stop to inquire about a wound. One of them stopped in front of Rivière's huddled form. With Carrel tubes reaching up his back, he looked like a monkey on a chain. However, this wound did not matter to him. He accepted it philosophically as part of the war. When the general asked kindly:

"And where were you wounded, *mon petit*?"

"In the operating-room, my general," Rivière replied, saluting solemnly.

One of the "*ministérielles*," in her zeal to help, had burned him with a hot-water bag during his operation. I cannot imagine why the doctor did not notice. Poor Rivière suffered more from this unnecessary wound

than from the original one, which was bad enough, causing him to remain ever in a sitting posture, except at night, when the Carrel tubes were disconnected. I was so upset about this accident that Madame G—— offered to treat him with the new method of ambrine. She dressed his burn during the lunch-hour so I could help her. I was so interested that I went to the “Mission de l’Ambrine” when we went “en repos,” and took the course.

The process of healing burns in this way is very simple and easily learned. The treatment is without pain, which seems unbelievable when one sees huge raw wounds. We took Rivière to the “salle de pansements” instead of doing his dressing in the ward, partly because the apparatus was easier to manage there, and also because of the frightful odor of the old dressings when they were removed.

Little by little, the new skin gains over the raw space. Wounds that have been

treated with ambrine heal without a scar. Even faces that have been badly burned are left clear and unmarred. It can only be used, however, on thoroughly clean, disinfected wounds, as it has no antiseptic properties. But a burn is never very septic, so that the wound is usually clean if it is not too deep. When not perfectly clean, the wound may be treated with "sérum physiologique" or "huile goménolée" or a "pansement humide" for two days instead of ambrine.

Ambrine gets its name from being the color of amber. It was first used for rheumatism. The idea is so simple that it seems strange no one thought of using it for burns before. Paraffin is taken at fifty-two degrees, a hundred parts for five or ten parts of gutta-percha, which makes the paraffin supple. This mixture, which looks like cakes of maple-sugar, is placed in an autoclave or popinal at one hundred and thirty degrees under pressure of one and one-half

kilograms for four hours. It is then left in water at eighty degrees until used.

The solution must never be boiled, as the petrol gases will be liberated, and this vapor is inflammable. Ambrine cools much more slowly than water. When applied on a wound at fifty degrees, it will only have lost five or six degrees by the next day. It does not burn and can even be used at sixty degrees on an open wound. Applied hot, it is liquid, but hardens when cooler, forming a supple shell, covering the wound, but separate from it and non-adhesive. Under the influence of the heat, the tissue dilates and mends itself.

The chief advantages of this treatment are its entire absence of pain, the quickness of the healing on account of so little loss of substance (the dermis not being destroyed), and the good quality of the cicatrice. Instead of putting the blessé to sleep during his operation, his wound is put to sleep for twenty-four hours, which en-

courages the epidermis to grow and the new skin to form and gain over the burned part. Unlike other dressings, it does not stick to the wound, so there is no pulling or tearing of the tissue in taking it off. After three days, white begins to appear around the edges and white spots form in the middle of the wound. These are new living cells. If this treatment does not succeed, the wound cannot be clean. It is the first dressing that aids nature, and is also used for eczema and frozen feet.

The method of applying ambrine is an important factor. I will tell you how Madame G—— treated Rivière. First, she removed the dressing and dead skin, pulling gently with forceps or cutting with scissors, but never touching with her hands or an unsterilized instrument or tearing any but loose pieces. She washed the wound with a solution of salt water, “eau oxygénée,” or Dakin, using a glass tube so that only the solution touched the wound. The edges

were then cleaned with alcohol or ether, and afterward zinc oxide or sterilized vaseline was applied. She dried the surface thoroughly with warm air. If not dried well, the ambrine will heat the water and burn. The ambrine is squirted on the wound with an atomizer or painted on with a brush sterilized for each dressing. When the surface is white, a thin layer of sterilized absorbent cotton is quickly put on to keep the heat and another coat of ambrine which clings to the cotton, forming a cover more supple than compresses. Both kinds of cotton are then wrapped around the dressing, held in place by moist bandages.

Every wound that came to us was infected and it was remarkable the way the men recovered. When every opening was filled with earth, bits of clothing, mud, and even flowers, there must be immense sepsis. Perhaps the microbes in the fields are not as deadly as those in crowded cities. The

men who had led healthy, moderate lives, especially peasants who had lived out-of-doors, of course, had the advantage. The men in the wards made better progress than the officers who were isolated. The officers' ward was usually empty except for a few beds clustered forlornly at one end.

Although the military discipline of our hospital was as rigid as that in the army, the "médecin-chef" being generalissimo, there was the same off-duty "camaraderie" among "majors" and poilus that I had noticed in Paris when officers and their men chatted together at the same table in a café. It seems, when off duty, the poilu can say what he likes with the freedom of a Roman soldier to the centurions. However, the collapse of the Russian army shows that only highly intelligent and patriotic soldiers can be allowed such license. The tie of service brings all dreams of brotherhood true, whether the French general calls his men "mes petits soldats" or



the British officer loves his men at a distance, as Robert Nichols expresses it:

“Was there love once? I have forgotten her.

Was there grief once? Grief still is mine.

Other loves I have; men rough, but men who stir  
More joy, more grief, than love of thee and  
thine.”

There is great confusion in the ward when a train of evacuation goes. The evening before, those who can walk gather around the stove, and we sing and drink “To the end of the war.” Each “*évacué*” gets a farewell friction and my initials in iodine on his chest besides a clean bandage for the journey.

Next day the caporal brings in a mass of uniforms and the personal effects taken from the men on their arrival. These have to be sorted out and each returned to the proper owner, even to the special “*bidon*” for wine. Socks, shirts, and anything destroyed or lost are replaced from the hospital supply. Each *blessé* has his papers



in a large envelope tied to a button of his coat, making him look like a helpless little child travelling alone for the first time. They are quite pathetic in their misfit uniforms, many of them bearing decorations pinned proudly on the shabby coat that has seen rough service, others wearing their glory and reward inside their chests or shining in their eyes.

It is hard to see them go, all these men whose sufferings I have shared, and with whom I have experienced the joys as well as the horrors of war. They come to us with tears of pain and leave us in tears of regret, some to their homes as "reformés," some to base-hospitals, others back to the front after a furlough.

Before the train leaves, I make a tour of inspection and am glad when I see the name of Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt on the side of a car as well as the usual red crosses, for then I know there is a clean little "salle de pansements" and a neat blue-and-white

kitchen. The officers have a special car, but the poilus are herded into box-stalls hastily arranged with swinging stretchers, two rows deep. I try to make them comfortable with little pillows under their heads and backs.

My blessés get so shuffled up in the process of embarkation that I run distractedly with flying cape and veil to find them and give them cigarettes and chocolate. However, if any one thinks he is being overlooked he calls me, so no one is left out. We wave as the train pulls out, calling "Au revoir!" and "Bonne chance!" until they are gone.

"I shall give myself the pleasure of seeing you in America soon" is a universal ambition. I suppose they have grown curious about us, or does the almighty dollar lure them from an impoverished country? By their letters of appreciation I still have news of them and can follow each one from hospital to hospital, at his home, or in the



The evacuation train.

They come to us with tears of pain and leave us in tears of regret, some to their homes as "reformés," some to base-hospitals, others back to the front after a furlough.



trenches, from a quiet rest "cantonnement" to the second line of the Boches, through all their danger and hardships, work and pleasures.

They make me feel as if I had two countries, my own and France. Work with her men in her hour of need has bound me more closely than months of travel and pleasure could have done. I have made friends that will last beyond the war. What matter where they come from or what they did before? They are worth remembering now and I am deeply touched when any of them greet me later, meeting by chance in Paris.

The poilu is unaware of his fineness, and yet there is some unconscious solace in his heart, the only thing man-made or God-made that war cannot take from him. He is brave as a matter of course because it is the better way. He rather regrets that it is necessary to be a soldier, and lets poets talk about it instead of doing so himself. The doctors are the ones who glory in being

military. But, though war has no glamour for him and life is dear, it is not so dear as France and honor.

When his wounds hurt or a long-expected letter fails to arrive, he grumbles, cursing the government and calling all those behind the lines slackers, but, except for these moments of depression and the agony of dressings or operations, he is contented enough. He does not worry about his future, but takes what comes as stoically as he can. These newsboys, apothecaries' clerks, carters, scene-shifters, blacksmiths, and porters are not the ones to philosophize about life. They are not morbid or sentimental and do not talk religion. They hate war and long for peace; but even more they hate those who do not take an active part in it, and feel a contempt for any one who tries to get peace without fighting for it. There seems to be an unexpressed conviction among them that this war must be fought to a finish, not only to the annihila-

tion of the Hun, but the end of all wars. Lifted out of their pre-war selves, they do their duty with the tenacity of the common, necessary man in the line.

English and American wounded are restless and their spirits require activity, but the Frenchman can lie in bed month after month discussing politics, reading, and writing letters. His stoicism under great pain is incredible, and though he comes from the humblest of homes, his education gives him some interest to fall back on. He is childishly unselfconscious, and his imagination and never-failing sense of humor make a game or joke of misfortune. He is always appreciative, refined, and gentle, sharing any present that may come for him with his comrades and never forgetting to offer some to me.

When in uniform, Tommy is undoubtedly more "chic." I have never seen a poilu in a uniform that fitted him. The long, bulky overcoat with its long-waisted belt makes



him look like a tramp. "Sac au dos," and laden with all their impedimenta, they look like an army of White Knights walking out of Alice's "Looking Glass" world. Their humor shows in their eyes and their mental attitude about things, giving expression and mobility to their faces, which are usually well modelled and sensitive and almost never fat. Though my heart aches when I see them, they soon make me forget their pain in their glory. The French may not be sports in our American and English athletic sense of the word, but for stoic endurance, self-sacrifice, and heroism they are the best of sports. They keep alive the spirit of France, though its morale may weaken in the rear.

When my ward was empty, I went to the emergency ward to help with the serious cases that could not be moved till the last minute. The ward is full of feverish men constantly asking for drinks. There is one with a chest wound who, forbidden to speak,



calls "Sist!" more loudly than the rest and more often. He is from the "midi," and for some reason, which I have never been able to discover, these "midi" men are not popular.\* They are usually the ones who swear hysterically and their bodies are tattooed. "Sist" is covered with beautiful women. I try to rub them out when I give him a friction, and it always amuses him to have me say, "Disparu," when I cover them with powder so he can blow it off again and reveal his fair escort as before. "They" are his wife, so he considers it quite all right to have them.

There are some who worry about their temperatures and almost turn their faces inside out trying to see their eyes and tongues at the same time in tiny cracked mirrors. Three "amputés" owe their lives to orderlies who gave some of their blood for a transfusion. "They are going to do

\*The troops who retreated when the Germans took Alsace-Lorraine were from the midi. Hence their reputation as cowards.

a confusion," one of the English told me, and it was a good description. The blood is carried by instalments in a syringe from one end of the room to the other, as the orderly is put in the first unoccupied bed, and the one to be saved is usually far up in the ward, near the stove. There is a large audience of doctors, medical students, infirmières, ministérielles, and orderlies.

Smoking is forbidden in this ward of "grands blessés," but one day I found a package half-full on Erard the "artilleur's" table. He has a Carrel tube in his head which he calls a telephone and reprimands me for using it so often. When I took his cigarettes, he said:

"They are good to eat, my friends. Didn't I tell you? See, the little Mademoiselle wants to try the rest."

The wounds were of all kinds, one man often having several. Sometimes they have lain neglected for days before being dis-

covered. One of them who had a frightful back told me he had received additional wounds while waiting to be picked up. The Germans had a habit of slashing and shooting the wounded as they passed over them. As I looked at the inevitable "éclats" treasured by the men, I learned about shells and bullets.

Shell wounds were frequent, an "éclat d'obus" often tearing a whole limb away, for these shells are intended to destroy fortified towns. Shrapnel is for people. It is a metal case holding dozens of bullets, perhaps a half-inch in diameter, packed by hand, carrying a charge of explosives timed to burst when it reaches its destination. Being smooth and round, the bullets go through soft tissue without much injury, but when they strike a bone they flatten and cause frightful pain. There is a barbaric German bullet, short and pointed, which when it strikes turns a somersault and goes in backward. The base having

been thus protected spreads, and the result is ghastly.

Sheets are hung around the beds of the dying, and the priest comes quietly through the back door, but every one knows what has happened. It is hard to be cheerful in this ward of strain and silence, and yet I feel more one of them, as if I had earned the right to be "Sister," as the English call their military nurses.

There were a few British wounded before we left. They were hurt by bombardments or accidents on their way to the front. In the evening they would gather in groups for close harmony, singing hymns and other melancholy selections. They asked me to join them, but I hated to spoil it, and, besides, did not care for their pathetic strains. Perhaps they were chosen out of respect to the more serious cases or maybe every Tommy is sentimental under a gruff and hearty exterior.

## CHAPTER X

### ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH FIFTH ARMY

THE long-rumored arrival of the British became an actual fact. Khaki-clad troops passed our hospital, swinging along to various gay tunes played by the first band I had heard outside of a vaudeville since I came to France. They were quite a contrast to the silent marching of the French as they returned, gray and tired, from their hard winter in the trenches. The smart-looking officers might have been riding in Hyde Park, so little did they suggest the ghastliness of the war they were going into. With every button on every Tommy's uniform shining and even the harness on the work-horses gleaming in the sun, they all looked as if they were

off on a lark. And yet their English voices singing songs I had often sung at home made war seem nearer.

The road was a whirl of action. Army scouts hurried noisily by on motorcycles. Military motor-cars and ambulances sped by. An occasional London motor-bus crowded with more singing boys rumbled past, followed by heavy lorries, groaning and creaking, cannon, kitchen and ammunition wagons moving slowly, with a cloud of dust behind.

The men seemed very young, even the officers. It was good to hear English and we talked if they halted near us. There was no presentiment of tragedy. Perhaps they did not realize, but I think they did, and it was just their courageous way of doing their bit. I shall never forget the heroic and inspiring impression they made with their shining buttons as they marched singing into one of the worst slaughters of the war. How terribly few of these



The arrival of the British Fifth Army.

Khaki-clad troops passed our hospital, swinging along to various gay tunes.





“cheereo” young men ever returned from this march. The song they sang most often I shall always remember:

“There’s a long, long trail a-winding into the land  
of my dreams

Where the nightingales are singing and the white  
moon beams.

There’s a long, long night of waiting until my  
dreams all come true

Till the day when I’ll be going down that long,  
long trail with you.”

And we never thought so many would pass into the land of dreams without any more waiting.

Having nothing to do for a week, owing to the necessity of waiting for “permission” to move to another part of the war zone, we walked through the country. Except for the exercise and being outdoors, I did not enjoy this much. The front seems so far away from everything one has grown to expect in life. The perpetual mud gives the landscape a lugubrious expression. It

seems a place set apart by a curtain of rain. One walks on and on through a monotonous flat land of vast mistiness and black crows, while the guns stir up the quiet atmosphere with their pounding like a melancholy storm.

One day Madame G—— and I set out for Ham, a town of about three thousand inhabitants before the war, situated on the River Somme, in a marshy country. We started in an ambulance, but as it was forbidden to carry passengers, we were shut out of sight with the back flap down. This was not interesting, so we soon got out and tried our luck again. This time, I stopped an English officer in a Rolls-Royce. In my embarrassment, I said:

“Oh, I am so sorry ! I would never have stopped you if I had known. I never expected there would be a staff-officer so near the front.”

“We leave Paris now and then if it is quite worth while, but what a shocking

bad opinion you have of us. What, what?" He laughed and took us in.

The streets of Ham were like a pageant. French poilus rubbed elbows with British officers, American Red Cross men strolled along with Scotchmen in kilts. There was even a troop of Chinese coolies. The few shops exhibited large supplies of wrist-watches and wedding-rings with every-day necessities of life. Tobacco was scarce. A long line extended into the street from the one shop that had any for sale.

The only ruin was the château, founded in the tenth century, with a great tower as its distinguishing feature. It had been used as a state prison, having had among other inmates Jeanne d'Arc and Louis Napoleon. Later, it was used as barracks until the Boches destroyed most of it, leaving a vast mass of stone partly blocking the canal.

We returned on top of a high-seated farm-wagon. There was a springlike mist in the air, though it was only February, and the

distance seemed to fade into soft pastel colors like a sunset. I never saw so many magpies. They gave contrast to the pale shades of the country as if on purpose.

Another day I had luncheon in Noyon, a town twice the size of Ham, situated on the slopes of a hill in Oise. This had been the German headquarters at the beginning of the war, so the buildings were almost all spared, and clustered around an open square with a fine old hôtel de ville and a twelfth-century cathedral. There are many shops and the streets were crowded. We had to have tea in a kitchen, as the tea-rooms were full of officers and canteen women.

We followed the remains of an old Roman wall to some cemeteries. The German graves were forlorn and neglected, with rough wooden crosses and numbers in contrast to the festive wreaths and flowers of the French. A German inscription on a large tomb in which many had been buried

showed that they were not all ignored and forgotten. These German graves depressed me. It seemed so sad to be left in the land of their enemy far from their homes with no one to care. After all, they were victims of the same militarism that was hurting us all, only more unfortunate because they were on the wrong side, pledged to follow false leaders.

On the way back we were picked up by two Tommies in a motor-lorry. They were so glad to speak English again that we were entertained all the way. Among other topics, the name of Lafayette was mentioned.

"I say, Sister," one of them began, "who is this Lafayette chap you Americans and French talk so much about?"

As I hesitated to resurrect the old enmity, the other quickly spared me:

"Why, don't you know? Thought everybody had heard of him. He's the famous English conjurer and lion-tamer that made

such a hit on the stage eight or ten years ago. Haven't you heard of him? He was burned to death in a fire. Famous, that's what he was, the greatest conjurer England ever had."

An English colonel and staff entertained us in a half-ruined cottage near the aviator's grave. Although we went in three divisions, we were rather overpowering. Just before our arrival, the colonel told us a general had appeared and had been almost shoved from the door so he would not see the table spread with the best tea-party I had seen since my arrival. It was far more complete and delicious than any one could find in pastryless Paris. There were white bread (a most unheard-of luxury), pastry, confitures, toast, and plenty of butter and sugar. I could hardly wait for the party to begin, and felt the way I did at my very first party when the hostess had discovered me sitting on the floor in front of the dining-room door instead of playing

games with the other children because I was "waiting for the party."

When our order to depart finally arrived, the colonel gave a farewell party to six of us, a dinner as complete and unexpected as the tea had been, with everything marvelous even to a savory. The menus were printed on crested paper under the title: "42d Field Ambulance B. E. F. Dîner à l'Equipe Américaine, Auto Chir No. 7."

We gathered around an open fire (another treat) afterward and listened to a Victor while the orderlies cleared the kitchen for dancing. We had to use the few good dance records over and over again. I will never hear the "Blue Danube" and the "Broken Doll" without thinking of that evening spent so gayly five miles from the German lines in a country soon to be taken by Von Hutier's first offensive. I do hope my friends came through.

To punish us for staying out so late, the sheet partitions were packed while



we dressed next morning. The interior of our barracks looked like a series of stage-settings for moving pictures, the incongruous sights one sees at the Universal City in California being the only approach to the impression we gave, each one busily occupied with something that had no connection with what went on beside her. The beds and wash-stands stood awkwardly with no wall to lean against and account for their miscellaneous positions. Everything happened at random, while along the centre aisle the sheets were folded and laid in piles by those who were through packing. The directrice, being tired, stayed in bed and gave orders as unconcernedly as if she were on a throne.

Before leaving Cugny, where I had lived so long and constantly without interruption, I went to a little hill to say good-by to some carrier-pigeons and the two men in charge. Here every one talks to every one. All barriers are broken down by the



great common interest. An American doctor went with me, and we arrived just as the wagon was moving away. A horse had been hitched to it and it was going "en repos" like the rest of the Third Army, which had done its duty all winter, and I do not know how long it had been in active service before I joined it.

The English loft was ready to take its place, an old motor-bus fixed over ingeniously into a little house. Two men could live in the lower part with bunks on one side and kitchen on the other, instead of camping outside in a tent, as the French had done. On top were the pigeons in a loft similar to the French, with the same little bell arrangement to announce the return of each messenger. It seemed like a boat drifting along independent of the massed formation of the rest of the army. These birds had helped in several important battles in Belgium. I wished they could have talked, for the men were so thoroughly

Scotch it was impossible to understand them. One must know many languages in this war, and one of the most difficult is English with all its accents. There is a store on the Rue de Rivoli in Paris with a sign "English Spoken. American Understood."

Carrier-pigeons have played a great part in this war. The French appreciated their value in the last war, when, during the siege of Paris, they were the only communication possible with the outside world. And yet, with the coming of wireless telegraphy, the use of these little messengers was supposed to have passed, and if it had not been for the interest in racing pigeons maintained by fanciers in France, Belgium, and England, there would have been no trained birds for this war.

Among the many new inventions we still need old-fashioned methods, and keep the old-time bayonets, hand-grenades, and pigeons. These birds did not look like

the ones we call carrier, with scrawny build, ragged feathers, and homely beak and eyes. They were cultivated as racing homers, and are small, well built, with beautiful feathers. They did not look like soldiers as they cooed and murmured comfortably in their clean loft. They seemed too frail and beautiful to be sent into the thick of battles, and yet even they had their part to play in the big war drama that called all to serve and spared no one.

Our équipe separated, some going to Paris or the Riviera for a vacation, others to Ressons-sur-Matz with the supplies, it being our official place of "repos." Not far from Compiègne, it was considered out of danger, and yet it soon became the front, and some of our supplies were lost.

It was a great privilege to take a course at Doctor Carrel's hospital installed in a hotel on the edge of the forest of Compiègne. It was so clean and well equipped after our Auto Chir that it was worth see-

ing, though the wounds were not as interesting as ours had been. The course consisted in lectures, some of which were illustrated with colored plates and practical demonstrations as we watched the surgeon on his round of dressings, all of which were done in bed. He was assisted by two infirmières, the matron, the doctor from the laboratory to take a blood-test each time, and two orderlies. With all of us and several other "stagiaires" there was quite a crowd, but blessés love an audience.

The laboratory work, examining the germs through a powerful magnifying-glass, and making the Dakin solution, completed the "stage," after which we went to the "Mission de l'Ambrine" which Madame la Baronne de Rothschild had installed in an old convent. While taking the courses we lived at a hotel opposite the château where the Etat-Major was located. We used to sit at the window and watch the staff-cars and gold-striped uniforms of all the Allied

forces. They brought the glamour of war to remind us that armies were not entirely composed of muddy tramps in misfit uniforms. The officers added to the "once-upon-a-time" impression of the historic château and park. Built during the times of Louis XV and Louis XVI on the site of an old hunting-lodge of the Frankish kings, it is very soothing and peaceful with its vine-covered arbors after the mud and shattered fragments of the front.

The cathedrals have many beautiful stained-glass windows illustrating scenes from the life of Jeanne d'Arc, who was captured here by the Burgundians and delivered to the English.

## CHAPTER XI

### EN REPOS

THE night before we left for Paris, the French "avions" made a raid on the German headquarters. Therefore the following night the enemy retaliated, and, although they did not succeed in hitting the château, our hotel was struck and my room lost its wall.

Paris was not a comfortable place at this time. Food restrictions were more severe. Pastry, candy, and sugar had disappeared. Bread cards were a necessity even in hotels. There was no cream or milk after nine o'clock A. M., not even for cooking. One could eat nothing between the hours of two and six in the afternoon, which reduced tea-parties to a lonely cup of tea or chocolate made with water and served

without cream or sugar. A few places started to serve figs and dates in place of sandwiches, but this was stopped immediately. Every one carried his own sugar-box, even to private houses. In the hotels a waiter made the rounds with a bottle of saccharine, giving a spoonful to those who had no sugar. One day when I had forgotten my little box, which was supplied indirectly by the American Commissary Department, a French aviator with a "croix de guerre" and long ribbon of palms offered me his. The "bonne camaraderie" of the front had come to Paris.

Paris was in fact in the war zone. The German offensive had begun on March 21, under Von Hutier, striking the British on the southern flank, not unexpectedly, but with invincible violence and superior numbers. Where the Fifth Army had been there opened up a thinly defended area which almost allowed the Germans to realize their dream of reaching Amiens and Paris.

A French officer reported that our little village of Cugny had been bombarded heavily shortly after our departure, and that forty people were killed. As I did not imagine there were that many inhabitants, it must have been wiped out of existence. Later, a British officer who had been sent to our former hospital, wounded in the arm, told how the British had set fire to it as the enemy approached so they would not profit by our supplies. Evidently the Germans had been counting on using it themselves, having spared it in all the raids while we were there. When they saw it in flames, they were so enraged that they shot the doctors and bayoneted the wounded before they could be hurried off in a train that was waiting.

I like to hear the English tell their experiences. They are so frank and unconscious of heroism. The war is hunting or cricket to them, and, though they rather wish it was being played in England, they



do not complain as long as they can run back to Paris now and then for a bath and good dinner. This officer told me calmly that he had been sent to Ham with a few men to load some barbed wire on a lorry. As they drew near the town, a shot was fired at them from behind a house. He left his ten men in shelter while he went on "to have a look in, as it seemed a bit odd." The town was full of Boches, who fired at them with machine guns as they crawled all the way back to Cugny in the ditches of the unprotecting road.

A world of cosmopolitan uniforms has almost obliterated the old Paris of the Louis and Napoleons. Their beautiful city of harmonious buildings, row after row of graystone carved into fragile designs or columns, with wide avenues and parks full of statues, has been turned into a city of khaki and sand-bags. The great doors of Notre Dame, the Arc de Triomphe, Napoleon's column in the Place Vendôme, and

the statues in the Place de la Concorde, around the Opéra and in the Tuileries are all disguised by a defense of sand-bags. And yet the wine-like atmosphere is ever there, making it still a city of romance.

Sometimes torches were set in the ground filling the air with a heavy black fog in an attempt to cover Paris with a protecting cloud. In the Bois de Boulogne and Luxembourg Gardens were a few balloons like those used for observation, but lacking the basket for the observer. When floating high at night, many wires were dropped and a fence formed, circling the city with a barrage of wire less dangerous to its inhabitants than the shrapnel of the anti-aircraft guns.

The cafés in the Bois and along the Champs-Élysées had not opened as yet after the winter. The theatres would often have to stop performances scarcely begun because of an air-raid. It would not have paid the managers to issue rain checks, as

it rained bombs so often. With nothing to do, the first charm of my vacation wore off when the luxuries of civilization ceased to be a novelty. I joined an "ouvroir" at the Porte Dauphine, where artificial limbs were made by hand out of papier-mâché. It made me happy to feel that I was still working for them "jusqu'au bout."

The city at night was even darker than last summer. Very few of the street-lamps were lighted, and these, under dark-blue shades, did not shine far. A lighted car or even a flash-light carried by a pedestrian aroused a protesting cry of "Pas de lumière!" One had to feel one's way in utter gloom under the archways that line the streets. Among so many fears, no single one predominates enough to make one afraid. People are cautioned to go into places of safety during air-raids to escape the falling shrapnel from the anti-aircraft guns as well as bombs dropped from the aeroplanes. Hotels and other large build-

ings open their corridors and cellars to the public, marking on the outside wall how many can be accommodated in each "abri." Every entrance to the underground railroads has "refuge" over it in large letters of the usual blue. Trains stop, and the civilians crowd into the Metro and Nord-Sud stations to wait for the "All clear" to be sounded by the firemen.

Air-raids occurred almost every night and sometimes twice in the same night. The damage done was greater than the one-sheet newspapers admitted, but repairs were quickly made, so there was scarcely a trace of the nightly tragedy. The "alerte" is given as soon as an enemy plane is reported to have crossed the front lines. At the warning shriek of the sirens and horns blown by firemen as their red cars speed through the city, the people disappear from the streets and upper stories of houses like ants into ant-hills. They say it is easy for the German aviators to find

Paris by following the black spot of the Forest of Compiègne and the river.

The "gothas" are so high that one can scarcely hear the machine guns on the planes or the hum of the motors, as one can when they fly low overhead at the front. Signal-lights like white and red stars move about, and the rumbling of the anti-aircraft cannon goes on in the distance. When a bomb falls there is a flash of light and a great crash and crunching sound. Except when these deafening bangs occur near by, it all seems far away and unreal. Night after night of interrupted sleep wore on the people so that there was an exodus of families with children and wounded from the hospitals. Except for a few people who drew their money from the banks, there was no sign of panic, though the Germans were advancing every day.

After one night of a few hours' sleep owing to raids, I was awakened at half past six by a crash. Wondering how the "gothas"

dared appear in daylight, I strolled out into the street, where groups of sleepy, surprised people were gathered together scanning the sky, which was perfectly clear. Not quite daring to return to my room on the top floor, I breakfasted at Rumplemeyers, where I discussed the situation with a Salvation Army woman, a Russian officer in civilian clothes (they all went into disguise after their revolution), and the madame who was vainly trying to lure her waitresses back from the street.

“Come back here, all of you,” she called like a distracted hen. “Why do you insist upon standing out there listening to all the horrible stories those people tell? They will make you believe that the Kaiser himself is coming here for breakfast. Voyons!”

By noon we learned that Paris was being bombarded by a long-range gun, carrying seventy-five miles from Laon, the nearest point of the German army. After another advance the cannon was moved nearer and

fired from the Forest of St. Gobain. The shell was not as large as one would expect, and the sound scarcely more than that of a cork popping unless it fell near by. For several days a shot came every fifteen minutes, and the people grew so accustomed to it that strangers in cafés would bet or have heated arguments as to how many seconds over or under fifteen minutes Big Bertha was coming.

The damage done by the long-range gun was not as great as that done during the air-raids, and yet it added considerably to the nervous strain and depression of spending part of every night in cellars, reading news of the German advance through all the "France reconquise" of the year before, and being in danger every fifteen minutes or half-hour of the day. It was a difficult test for even the strongest to stand. When the church of St. Gervais was struck, on Good Friday, and some of my friends had to search every hospital and even the



morgue for missing members of their families, I did not blame any one who left for the sunny south. I longed to be safe at the front again. There, at least, one could feel that the "gothas" might not hit a hospital, but in Paris one could not help realizing that each bomb was intended to kill as many people as possible. It makes one a fatalist, this feeling that only Providence or luck saves each moment from being the last. How could one tell which way to go when any direction might prove fatal?

And yet, in spite of the unconquerable confidence in the future and the calm poise of the people, the shadow of war has fallen on the city. Both times I was in Paris when the morale was depressed, and I am glad I stayed long enough to adjust my impressions and separate the real from the false, the brave native soul of the city from the war-corrupted forms that covered it, washed back from the battles of many nations at war in one country.



Paris is so far removed from the action and courage of the front that the unfit and afraid, the despair of the refugees, the poverty and worry and sorrow of the women, the careless attitude of the wounded and soldiers on leave, all help to give the impression of a great city dying. Seen from the streets, the life of Paris is abnormal and very tired, full of unrestrained loving and cadaverous faces with haunted eyes. People almost fall asleep as they trudge along in dowdy clothes, and cabs run riotously, with no traffic regulations. There is no conscience in these people who have been through unspeakable sorrow and pain, and no consequences to be feared. A frantic effort is made by exiles and all the homesick soldiers who expect to die soon to crowd as much pleasure of any kind into what time remains. They have been through the worst and nothing matters.

Everywhere houses are closed or for rent; even some of the large buildings that

had been used as hospitals are now vacant. The shop-windows hide their increasing emptiness behind fantastic designs made of pieces of paper pasted in long strips across the glass to prevent breakage by concussion during air-raids. In the homes of titled people one finds them living in large houses half closed, the walls dismantled and the treasured heirlooms, tapestries, and pictures sent away to the south for safe-keeping. One or two servants are all that remain of the once luxurious establishments, but there is no entertaining, so the work is light. The French are taking the war as seriously as they formerly took life frivolously; many of the women who were accustomed to ease and luxury are now hard at work in hospitals. I know one white-haired countess who was an invalid before the war, and is now head of a hospital of six hundred beds.

The French gayety and enthusiasm seem to have burnt out, but underneath the dreary exterior a keen patriotism still lives,

unhurt by war and its evil effects, strengthened by the nobility of its past, and looking forward to new beauty in the future. This unconquerable spirit is so great that it dwarfs the things that cannot spoil it, and scatters abnormality and unhealthiness before it like a fresh breeze. The true soul of France tries to show all who are depressed that war cannot eat up the world. Man may try to destroy himself and use his knowledge to ruin all, but there are bigger things that have a life he cannot crush, and that will wait patiently for the storms to pass and the real work of the world to go on, the broken threads of life to be picked up and continued.

It is easy to love the Paris of peace-time with its shaded avenues, built by kings who had no scruples about pushing the poor out of the way. With a genius for making scenery and architecture harmonize, they edge their avenues with long lines of symmetrical houses and colonnades.

But in war-time you must use your imagination and let it carry you back to the Paris that made history. Let your eyes follow the domes and spires up to the sky, where rainbows and unusual cloud effects are ever changing, due to intermittent showers. You have only to watch the sky to realize where the French artists find inspiration.

There are not enough artists in life. Any one taking a picture of Paris at this time would show a city paralyzed by four years of war and suffering, the weary heart of a country that has given up caring about life and clean things, a people who just want to lie down and die, resentful of the American energy that is coming in so late to stir it up again. But an artist is not satisfied with plain facts as they appear on the surface. He penetrates to the innermost depths and finds the true meaning. Then he paints a picture with a soul.

The wide culture and psychological genius

of Paris is not dead, only smothered temporarily by a cloud of nervous pleasure-seekers who overrun the city while its heroes are dying at the front. These parasites prey upon Paris when it has no vitality to shake them off. However, their voices are not so loud as the real voice that speaks from the spires of Notre Dame and the height of the Arc de Triomphe.

The "repos" of the Third French Army was rudely interrupted, and General Humbert's reserves were sent out to stop the German advance. When my orders came to report for duty at Compiègne, then evacuated and almost in the hands of the enemy, every one said good-by as if they never expected to see me again. But really I was glad to leave Paris. The perpetual bombing was horribly on my nerves. I wanted to go where I could be busy enough to forget. I had even envied the concierge when he stopped cleaning windows, pulled down his sleeves, and apologetically ex-

plained as he ran the elevator that he had to be "all things" now. One can only endure war when one is not thinking. At the front there is no time to worry and wonder where the shells are falling, no time to think, just a lot of work that must be done quickly.

A great many hospitals, field and base, had evacuated and were pushing south, so we were unable to install our Auto Chir until the offensive was broken and the counter-attacks began. Our supplies, supposedly left in a safe place, were inaccessible. In the meantime, we were to help the American Red Cross to care for the refugees, and to work in a canteen kitchen at the station. On our way out, the roads were full of the British going back, some of them being the sole survivors of their companies, and the French coming up with flowers in their bayonets and victory in their eyes.

## CHAPTER XII

### DURING THE GERMAN ADVANCE

THE houses along the railroad near Compiègne were only shells of what they had been the last time we made this trip. There were large shell-holes in the street leading to the hotel, now occupied by the American Red Cross. The hotel had lost its inside walls and had no running water, electric light, or servants. Only soldiers and war workers were to be seen. With no mail service, not even a newspaper, and the civilians gone, the town was in a pathetic state of dilapidation. But it was not quite empty of its civilian population. Here and there would be a dog, guarding faithfully the door of a crumbling, roofless house, or some starving cats would cry in the abandoned streets like lost children.



We were appointed various tasks as waitresses and housemaids in the hotel, and chauffeurs to collect refugees, wounded, and supplies. A few of us were sent to care for the wounded at the station and in an abandoned hospital. I went to the canteen kitchen near the station and crossroads to give coffee, crackers, chocolate, and cigarettes to the troops passing through on foot or driving the big guns and supply-wagons. Sometimes we would gather up a handful of chocolate and cigarettes and run into the road among the confusion of guns, heavy wheels, and horses' hoofs to throw something to the drivers who were unable to rejoin the line around the kitchen on wheels and its surrounding baskets.

Usually I would stand all day, giving cigarettes with one hand and chocolate with the other to fill the endless line of outstretched hands. I had to stop sometimes to remind some one that he had returned too many times, and was cheating others



of their share. They liked to see how often they could come back without being recognized, these poilus ever ready to tease. Sometimes, a former blessé of mine would greet me and cheer me on with a work that was rather fatiguing and not very interesting. One of them brought me a little girl "who had fallen from the nest," and could not find her parents. She had golden curls and such an appealing manner that I wanted to adopt her, but had to give her up to the Red Cross when I was reminded that my work was with the blessés.

As the laundry had been destroyed, we conserved the few uniforms we had brought with us in answer to the order: "Bring only what you can carry." We wore our dark-blue travelling uniforms with aprons that once had been clean, and tied our dark-blue veils back as if we were about to sweep a room. This was not the time to worry about looking "réglementaire." One did what one could.

We even wore our uniforms at night when we slept in the damp "caves" deep down under the château. At first we stretched out on blankets on the moist stone floor, but later we had canvas beds like large camp-stools, not comfortable, but good enough when one was tired standing up all day. I even kept my boots on because the dampness made them too wet if I took them off and left them under the bed. Here we slept night after night during the bombardments, English and American canteen workers, Red Cross men, poilus, all of us in a long row in the narrow corridor of the cave.

At six o'clock we would scramble up the slippery stairway several flights to the ground floor, leaving our blankets in a dry place, and hurry to the hotel to wash. This was a hope rarely realized, for usually a shell would whistle menacingly by the window, and we would be ordered to the wine-cellar under the hotel "toute de suite."

Here we opened boxes of supplies for the canteen workers, and broke chocolate into pieces until the danger was over. We had to carry our gas-masks strapped over our shoulders wherever we went, as the rumor was that gas-bombs were being dropped.

The day nurse at the abandoned hospital asked for assistance, and I was sent to help her, though what she really needed was an orderly. There were gangrene cases and a "trépané," and the work was the hardest and most disagreeable I had ever done. But it was so necessary I liked it better than the canteen, where I felt like a moving-picture actress as I ran wildly about among the heavy wagons with my veil floating in the wind and cigarettes dropping from my overflowing hands. One English-speaking boy had scribbled: "Darling, I love you. Love you myself?" In the hospital I was treated with respect. Some ambulance-drivers told me afterward that when they picked up men from these troops later they

invariably asked to be taken where the "petites infirmières" were, so in spite of their jokes we were evidently appreciated.

There was one doctor who had remained at Royallieu when the hospital had been evacuated, and one French nurse who had returned from "permission" after the others had left. She was shocked at the way things had been managed.

"No, mesdames, this was not an evacuation. This hospital was abandoned in great haste. It is shameful."

The doctor had no orderlies. There were a few roaming around quite intoxicated, but when asked to carry water or find food for their own countrymen, they always replied negatively that they were "of another service." We often gave the blessés our lunch. Work with men dying of gangrene-poisoning does not make one hungry, and most of them were too hurt or feverish to eat much. But even water was hard to get. We wasted time and energy looking

for the simple necessities that are usually taken for granted in a hospital. So many dressings and operations had to be done with the same meagre supply of instruments that I was always cleaning and sterilizing them. But that was better than helping the doctor, for the odor of gangrene is beyond human endurance in a ward with the windows closed. Even matches were hard to get and we needed our lamp every minute for sterilizing and hot drinks. We could only do as the doctor ordered to the best of our ability with what material we could find or invent, tumbling into our cots in the dark each night after the others had fallen asleep.

We were relieved at eight o'clock by the night nurse and drove back by "camionette" to the caves. The sky was red where the roar of artillery showed the fighting was going on. It seemed very near. We knew the bridge was mined and that we might have to leave at a moment's notice. Day

after day this life went on with no change, not even of clothing. I was too tired to worry about the poor dying blessés or the danger. The feeling of it all being a dreadful nightmare from which we must waken acted as a narcotic. It seemed too unreal and too unnatural to last.

Early in April, the French reserves began their counter-attacks to break the German offensive. These battles were so costly that we had to work night and day, sometimes thirty-six hours without a rest and only a little food snatched quickly before an orderly appeared announcing: "Encore des entrants!"

Our Auto Chir was installed in barracks near the one in which I had been working. As soon as the first ward was ready we moved our blessés into it, those that still lived. The task of reinstalling an evacuated hospital at a moment's notice with blessés arriving all the time was gigantic. Madame Carrel gave us some supplies from her

hospital, which had been bombed. We spent many days carrying mattresses and making bed after bed, in one ward after another, in the confusion of conflicting and contradictory orders.

"These mattresses must not be used here. The whole ward will have to be done over with the mattresses in the next pavillon." Or the *médecin-chef* would say, "There are too many beds in this room" or "Those beds must all be taken out of here. They belong to the officers' ward at the end of the pavillon."

When there was time, we slept and ate in a barrack of brick and cement like the wards at the end of the row of "pavillons." The place suggested a prison more than anything else. At first there were no sheets for our beds, eight in a room with no partitions, but as we were always chilly and damp living in such a cellar, we did not mind sleeping in our clothes. Behind each bed was a shelf running around the room



on which to unpack whatever we might need in a hurry. These shelves were an untidy smattering of soap, condensed milk, cigarettes, powder, malted-milk tablets, a tooth-brush, a candle, and almost anything. Our possessions were reduced to the lowest common denominator, the rest being stowed under the bed.

Our only needs were sleep and food. Even these were not always obtainable. It is hard for eight people to be quiet, or should I say, eight women? Some one writes letters by a flickering candle, some one snores, some one makes a hot drink, and others gossip about people at home. As for food, mouse-trap cheese and rancid butter seemed to be ever with us. Potatoes were the vegetable, and eggs or tinned food the meat. Confiture was available but there was only enough for one turn. Being so poor in quality, the food did not give us an appetite; quite the contrary. After each meal we would make coffee or chocolate and smoke



to fill up the gaps. I shall never scorn "Fatimas" or "Lucky Strikes," for they helped to "keep the home-fires burning" at this critical time.

Pinning two strips of red flannel on a towel, we put up a flag by the first "pavillon" so that the ambulance-drivers would know where to leave the wounded. Ours must have been the only field-hospital for miles around, for they kept arriving, from various services, French and American, leaving broken bodies with bandages half fallen off the hastily dressed wounds, returning again and again with more. We had only room for the worst cases, mostly hemorrhages, so the less serious were sent farther south to a base-hospital.

I went on twenty-four-hour duty in the triage, or receiving-room. Every other night is enough for sleep, and I used the rest of my off-duty time to help unpack boxes of supplies or do odd jobs in the "salle de pansements," where dressings were done so

continually that things could not be prepared fast enough. It would have been impossible to sleep in the daytime with every one coming into the room.

The triage is kept warm with a stove that heats water for the washing and hot-water bags. There are rests for five stretchers, and beside each a little table with basin, soap, brushes, and towels. A meagre supply of hot-water bags hang on nails along the wall. Towels and shirts are kept on shelves at one end of the room. At the other, near the window, is a long table with benches where the sergeant and his orderlies, all of them priests, write the histories of the men who are brought in. They also print beautifully lettered signs to be put on doors of offices and wards. Opposite their table is my dressing-cart with a large supply of bottles, compresses, bandages, and cotton, with an alcohol-lamp on a shelf continually burning to sterilize syringes and needles.

Only five men can be attended to at a

time, so some have to wait in the next room, where the stretchers and blankets are kept. There they lie, moaning and begging for water, until the "brancardiers" carry them into the triage, where they are undressed and washed by the two "laveurs" and me as quickly as possible, given an injection of antitetanus and any other "piqûre" needed to stimulate them. Sometimes a 500-grammes saline injection is necessary. The great need and hope that an injection may give them less pain or even save their lives made this task less difficult, though I had dreaded it so much a few months before in the ward when it was time for the second antitetanus "piqûre." The desire to help overcame my former reluctance and I was very generous with strychnia, morphia, and camphorated oil. However, after twenty-four hours of this I would sometimes come to the dining-room pinching my arms, automatically looking for a place to insert a needle.

Reinforcing the dressings was another hard part of my work. Most of the blessés had received first-aid treatment, but the ride in a jolting ambulance had loosened their dressings, so that some of them fell off, and all were soaked through with blood. Many hemorrhages had to be stopped.

One time I had to put several compresses in a large hole in a man's back while he leaned forward on the stretcher. Fearing that the strain might be too great, I stopped in the midst of my extempore dressing to look around at him. What was my surprise to see him white and hollow-eyed but smoking a cigarette !

An officer, not to be outdone, fumbled among his "effets" for an old newspaper, which he held upside down waiting for an operation from which he did not recover.

There were so many being brought in all the time that the operating-room was always full. Some of the blessés had to wait, lying on stretchers many hours until

there was a vacancy. There were plenty of "aides-majors" to do the dressings but few surgeons to operate.

Some of the men were sent to the X-ray first to have the position of pieces of shell marked on their bodies and data recorded. There were more of these "radioscopies" done in a rush than plates photographed. I would sometimes have to stand by the table to hold a delirious blessé who threw himself about, as the "radiographe" had his hands full with his complicated apparatus.

I would make a list of the most urgent. Sometimes I would take a serious case to the operating-room myself right away, holding one end of the stretcher and kneeling on the floor by the door regardless of mud to keep frantic hands from scratching an open wound.

Sometimes German prisoners were brought in. One would expect them to be coolly received in the midst of so many suffering Frenchmen, and I marvelled at

the great humanity that made the doctors and orderlies care for their enemies as well as their own countrymen. In spite of the many atrocities one hears, these prisoners always said, "Thank you very much," in French, when I gave them hypodermics, which according to their Kultur might have been poison. With their hats off they are not a bit impressive or fierce. Their heads are flat in the back, as if things had been left out. When one of them was dying, I did not put him on the urgent list, thinking the French more important. But a doctor came in and hurried him off right away.

Returning from the "radio" or operating-room after accompanying the stretchers to open doors, keeping some one from falling off, or reminding the "brancardiers" with a "Doucement!" that they were not jogging along swinging bags, I would make a hasty survey of the two waiting-rooms to see if there were any hemorrhages or if a "pi-qûre" was needed.

In the triage there would always be new arrivals waiting, and each must have a nasal injection and gargle preparatory to his operation, a clean shirt, and hot-water bag if there was one left. I had to collect and redistribute them among the most urgent. To shuffle five among fifty-five men or more arriving in a night took careful management.

There was enough work for several "infirmières," but I never called for assistance, because every one else was working overtime in her department. The arduous task of doing so many things at once over and over again, and being in several rooms at the same time, acted as a panacea at this time of danger and anxiety. It was stiff, dirty work, not sympathetic, as the ward had been. There were no smiles here, only moaning and writhing and an occasional stoic "It is going better now. Thank you," that was almost harder to bear than complaining or delirious crying.



The conscious were the hardest to watch, for they were so brave in their agony. The shell-shocked and delirious are mercifully dulled to pain. The sight of so many mangled bodies is appalling, some carried face downward, and all suffering excruciating torture from more than one wound. There is little complaining or swearing, only a low moaning sound of a hurt animal, broken by sharp cries of "O, là, là, how I suffer!" or some feverish one talking about his wife or mother.

"Mademoiselle, I am the last my parents have. Don't let me leave them. The others are killed. I must go back to them." I had scarcely time to reassure him when from the next stretcher would come frightened cries of "The Boches! the Boches! they will get to Paris, my beautiful Paris! They will assassinate the world, the whole world!"

Then all would be quiet except for the sound of washing as the "laveurs" worked on and on, and the twisting, writhing, and



turning of aching bodies in search of the least painful position. Sometimes a pool of blood under the stretcher would show that some urgent case must be hurried to the operating-room. Sometimes a pale greenish-gray color would spread over a white face, and a gurgling noise would tell me that it was too late to hurry this one. The "brancardiers" did not like to see me cry, and I have seen them hurrying off with some blessé, whispering: "Quick! He must not die here!"

It was harder to see the men brought in wearing their uniforms than it had been in the ward when they appeared washed and operated, with clean bandages, the worst over as a rule and a hopeful convalescence ahead. In my off-duty time I would sometimes look through the wards to see how they came through, but I gave up this idea, as it was too sad to find how few survived.

No wonder our newspaper reporters write

encouraging accounts of the dilapidation of the German prisoners, in spite of which fact war goes on. All men look like tramps after weeks and months of exposure in the trenches, with their faces gray and tired and almost as stiff and muddy as their uniforms. They are a pathetic sight in their uniforms, once so new and proud, now all torn, blood-stained, and caked with clayey yellow mud. The mud clings to their clothes and hair and wounds. One could knock it off in lumps. They look so forlorn lying on the straw-covered stretchers with their hobnailed boots sticking out beyond the blanket, on which are sometimes scattered cigarettes from the precious supply of a kind-hearted ambulance-driver (American, of course!), but lying unnoticed before the staring, unseeing eyes that look beyond with an expression that pleads for something we cannot give.

To realize the poverty of France after four years of war, one should see the order-

lies pulling an exhausted, panting man out of his clothes instead of ripping them quickly and letting him save what strength remains for his operation. When I hurry to the rescue with my scissors, they mutter disapprovingly:

“Mademoiselle is American and does not know what poverty is. France is too poor to give new uniforms to all these men.”

I would stagger back at the end of my twenty-four hours to report, with an apron and often a face spattered with blood and mud, and yet a spirit radiant and unweary with the thrill of service. A feeble whisper of thanks from the lips of a man suffering untellable agony or the unspoken gratitude in dying eyes made me realize that the girl who had started humbly and ignorantly to be in a supply-room was making good in a real work.

The operating goes on night and day, the old cases when there is time and the new cases always. Our life seemed unreal,

like a series of moving pictures turned very fast over and over again. All day and all night the ambulances would rumble in and out, and more piles of dirty, blood-soaked clothes would be taken away to be washed or burned. These little heaps were very sad. Here would be a sweater, torn and stained, made by some loving hands, and there a precious band that every poilu wraps around his waist cut ruthlessly and thrown away.

As soon as blessés could be evacuated, they were sent off in "péniches," the old boats that used to go up and down the Seine being used instead of trains. Skirting the banks, green with budding trees, they were safe from Taubes. How restful this ride must have been !

The work was not an uninterrupted series of horrors. Even the triage had its diversions. When not busy, the priests would make sketches and caricatures. There was a staff of Annamites in saffron-colored

uniforms and red turbans, who cleaned and swept and carried stretchers. They were absolutely alike and seemed little boys more than grown men. The sergeant and I had to manage them by pantomime orders, which was quite amusing, as they spoke and understood only a guttural language of monosyllables. Generals would make tours of inspection, and for a while some American doctors followed me about asking me to explain what I was doing. I had had all my training in French and knew only the French terms for everything. They added greatly to the confusion and made me rather nervous, but habit had made me sure of my work. No matter what happened I could not lose my sense of humor, and found it hard not to laugh when one blessé took out some false teeth and solemnly washed them in the water I had prepared for him to gargle.

For a long while no mail penetrated to our new post. Among the first letters that

came was one from a "filleul" enclosing some flowers which he had found on the edge of his trench a few kilometres from the German lines. Imagine a man shooting other men, stopping to notice or even being able to see flowers, and then send them to a foreigner who spoke his language with difficulty and just happened to take care of him for a while when he was hurt!

My life had been going on indoors as if I were in a tunnel, and it was hard to realize that spring had come outside in spite of war. It seemed ironical and almost cruel that flowers could have the heart to bloom and that birds could sing as merrily as they did before these four years of sadness and suffering. Perhaps the earth, neglected and unable to produce grain to nourish her poilus, was doing her best to compensate with flowers for the delight of their souls. And the poilus, even on the edge of battlefields, appreciate her efforts with souls not weakened but exalted by war. They still

have eyes to see violets growing on the sides of their trenches. It will take more than militarism to conquer these poilus of France.

And in the triage, day after day, and night after night, the "brancardiers" shuffled back and forth carrying shattered pieces of these same poilus to be patched up and sent back to the trenches. No wonder Lord Kitchener said:

"The best soldier is the healed wounded man who returns to the fire."







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